ART250

FRENCH FILM HISTORIES
FALL 2002

Reading Packet Bibliography
ART250 (French Film Histories), Fall 2002

Méliès, Georges. "Cinematographic Views," French Film Theory and Criticism: 1907-1939, vol. 1, Ed. Richard Abel. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988. 35-47.

Roud, Richard. "Louis Feuillade and the Serial," Rediscovering French Film. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1983. 45-51.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Movies and Methods, vol. 2. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985. 303-315.

Andrew, Dudley. "Poetic Realism," Rediscovering French Film. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1983. 115-119.

Abel, Richard. "The Transition to Sound," French Film Theory and Criticism: 1907-1939, vol. 2, Ed. Richard Abel. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988. 5-25.

Bazin, André. "The Destiny of Jean Gabin," What Is Cinema? (vol. 2). Trans., Hugh Gray. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971. 176-8.

Turim, Maureen. "Poetic Realism as Psychoanalytical and Ideological Operation: Michel Carné's *Le Jour se lève* (1939)," French Film: Texts and Contexts, Ed. Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau. London and New York: Routledge, 2000. 63-77.

Rousso, Henry. Introduction and "The Dark Years and the Silver Screen," The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France Since 1944. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991. 1-11, 226-240.

Mayne, Judith. "Henri-Georges Clouzot's *Le corbeau* and the Crimes of Women," Sites: the Journal of 20th century/Contemporary French Studies, Ed. Timothy Murray. Vol. 4., no. 2. Fall 2000. 319-341.

Truffaut, François. "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema," Movies and Methods, vol. 1, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985. 224-237.

----------: 'Evolution of the New Wave': Truffaut in interview with Jean-Louis Comolli, Jean Narboni (extracts)," Cahiers du Cinéma, 1960-68: New Wave, New Cinema, Reevaluating Hollywood. (ed. Jim Hillier). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986. 106-110.

Godard, Jean-Luc. "Les 400 Coups," Cahiers du Cinéma, the 1950's: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave. (ed. Jim Hillier). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press., 1986. 51-52.

"Jean-Luc Godard: 'From Critic to Film-Maker': Godard in interview." Cahiers du Cinéma, the 1950's: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave. (ed. Jim Hillier). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press., 1986. 59-67.

Aumont, Jacques. "The Fall of the Gods: Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Mépris*," French Film: Texts and Contexts. Eds. Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau. London and New York: Routledge, 1990. 217-229.

Brody, Richard. "An Exile in Paradise: How Jean-Luc Godard Disappeared from the Headlines and Into the Movies," The New Yorker, November 20, 2000. 62-76.

Doane, Mary Ann. "The Voice in the Cinema: the Articulation of Body and Space," Movies and Methods, vol. 2. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985. 565 576.

Jean Domarchi, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, Jean-Luc Godard, Pierre Kast, Jacques Rivette, Eric Rohmer. "'Hiroshima mon amour.'" Cahiers du Cinéma, 1960-68: New Wave, New Cinema, Reevaluating Hollywood. (ed. Jim Hillier). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986. 59-70.

Ropars-Wuilleumier, Marie-Claire. "How history begets meaning: Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959), French Film: Texts and Contexts (first edition), Ed. Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau. London and New York: Routledge, 1990. 173-185.

Vincendeau, Ginette. "Designs on the *Banlieue*: Mathieu Kassovitz's *La Haine* (1995)," French Film: Texts and Contexts (second edition). London and New York: Routledge, 2000. 310-327.

Ang, Ien. "Hegemony-in-Trouble: Nostalgia and the Ideology of the Impossible in European Cinema," Screening Europe: Image and Identity in Contemporary European Cinema, Ed. Duncan Petrie. London: British Film Institute, 1992. 21-31.

130. See, for instance, Ricciotto Canudo, "Notre Esthétique: A propos du *Rossignol* de Igor Stravinsky," *Montjoie!* 4–5–6 (April–May–June 1914), 7.

131. Léopold Survage, "Le Rythme coloré," *Les Soirées de Paris*, 26–27 (July–August 1914), 426–29. Survage deposited a second document, "La Couleur, le mouvement, le rhythme," with the Académie des Sciences de Paris, on 29 June 1914, reprinted in Survage, *Rythmes colorés, 1912–1923* (Saint-Etienne: Musée d'art et d'industrie, 1973), [7–8]. Cf. Abel Gance's more conventionally Symbolist project, "La Legende de l'arc-en-ciel," which he conceived after reading Lucien Chassagne's "Le Second Stade de l'art de l'avenir: Les symphonies de la lumière," *Le Journal* (22 August 1913)—see Rogert Icart, *Abel Gance ou le Prométhée foudroyé* (Lausanne: L'Age d'homme, 1983), 46–48.

132. Bruno Carra had developed a similar, even more thorough, theory of abstract cinema in "Abstract Cinema—Chromatic Music," *Il pastore, il gregge e la zampogna*, 1 (Rome: Libreria Bertrami, 1912), trans. Caroline Tisdall in *Futurist Manifestoes*, ed. Umbro Apollonio (New York: Viking, 1973), 66–70. See, also, Standish Lawder, *The Cubist Cinema* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), 21–26; Robert Russell and Cecile Starr, *Experimental Animation* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1976), 35–40; and Liebman, "French Film Theory, 1910–1921," 6, 10.

133. The theoretical basis of Survage's project thus is rooted in late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century Romanticism, especially German Romanticism, as well as "French avant-garde Realism"—see Rosen and Zerner, *Romanticism and Realism*, 34, 52, 73, 155. Survage's language here is also close to that of Georges Braque's "Personal Statement" (1910): "I must therefore create a new sort of beauty, the beauty that appears to me in terms of volume, of line, of mass, of weight, and through the beauty interpret my subjective impression. Nature is a mere pretext for a decorative composition, plus sentiment"—quoted in Kenneth Eric Silver, *Esprit de Corps: The Great War and French Art, 1914–1925* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Inc., 1981), 110.

134. Canudo, "Notre Esthétique," 7. Canudo is paraphrasing Walter Pater.

135. Dudley Andrew, *The Major Film Theories* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 6–8. Cf. Noël Carroll, "Film History and Film Theory: An Outline for an Institutional Theory of Film," *Film Reader*, 4 (1979), 81–96.

136. I have chosen to focus on the "relative autonomy" of French discourse on the cinema as an ideological practice rather than attempt to privilege its relationship to the economic infrastructure or "generative mechanism" on which that discourse depends—see Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History: Theory and Practice* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 15.

137. Le Mauvais Oeil, "Les Films tels qu'ils sont," *Le Courrier cinématographique*, 5 (11 August 1911), 11.

138. Ernest Le Jeunesse, "Ciné-critique," *Le Journal* (20 March 1914), 6; Serge Bernstamm, "Ciné-critique," *Le Film*, 15 (5 June 1914), 9–10.

French Film Theory and Criticism:
1907-1939. vol. 1.
Ed. Richard Abel
Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press,
1988.

Selected Texts

GEORGES MÉLIÈS, "Cinematographic Views"

Méliès's original text was written during the summer of 1906 and published near the end of the year as "Les Vues cinématographiques" in the *Annuaire général et international de la photographie* (Paris: Plon, 1907), 362–92. This translation by Stuart Liebman is a slightly cut version of that original text, and considerably longer than the short version published in *La Revue du cinéma* (15 October 1929) as advance publicity for the Méliès gala organized by Paul Gilson and Jean-George Auriol at the Salle Pleyel on 6 December 1929. A translation of the short version by Stuart Liebman appeared in *October* 29 (Summer 1984), 23–31.

IN THIS talk, I propose to explain as best I possibly can the thousand and one difficulties that professionals must surmount in order to produce the artistic, amusing, strange, or simply the natural subjects that have made the cinematograph such a craze all over the world.

Many volumes would be needed for old hands like myself to write down everything they have learned by the seat of their pants during long years of constant labor, and the space I have at my disposal is unfortunately very limited.

My intention is also primarily to consider unknown aspects of the construction of cinematographic views, most notably the difficulties audiences are unaware of but which are encountered at every turn during the execution of works that seem wholly simple and natural.

In exhibition halls I have often heard the most absurd remarks unquestionably proving that a large number of spectators are miles away from imagining how much work goes into the views they were watching. Some of them, understanding nothing of the way in which "that can be done," simply and naïvely say: *It's only a trick!* Or else: *They must have taken those in a theater!* and, satisfied by their explanation, they conclude with: *It doesn't matter, it's well made all the same.*

Obviously, one can only have reflected for a minute to express such an opinion; the absence of daylight in theaters, the impossibility of properly illuminating the stage and sets in a regular and continuous manner; the very particular kind of mimicry in cinematographic views, so different from that in the theater, as you will see later on; the very limited length of the reels—these are some of the causes that make it impossible or almost so to make films under these conditions. When filmed, even the way in which the theatrical sets are painted makes a woefully bad impression, as I

will explain in the chapter about decor. Many concern themselves very little with these matters and do not even attempt to take them into account.

But there is a group of spectators who will not be annoyed, but rather will be delighted to obtain some information to satisfy their curiosity, which, moreover, is very justifiable and natural in intelligent people who always seek to know the explanations behind what they are looking at.

It is this category of spectator, certainly the most numerous, that I will try to satisfy. . . .

THE DIFFERENT GENRES OF CINEMATOGRAPHIC VIEWS

There are four broad categories of cinematographic views, or at least, all such views may be linked to one of these categories. There are so-called *natural* views, *scientific* views, *composed subjects*, and the so-called *transformation* views. I have deliberately set up this classification in the very order in which cinematographic views have successively appeared since the first screenings. In the beginning, views were exclusively of natural subjects; later, the cinematograph was employed as a scientific machine before finally becoming a device used in the theater. From the beginning, its success was enormous; at first this success depended on people's curiosity about animated photographs; but once the cinematograph was put in the service of theatrical art, its success was transformed into a triumph. Since then, this marvelous instrument's popularity has only grown with every passing day until it has assumed prodigious proportions.

NATURAL VIEWS

Those who took up cinematography all began by making natural views; whatever particular area they devoted themselves to, all have also continued to make such films from time to time. These views consist of cinematographically reproducing scenes from ordinary life: views taken in the streets, in the squares, by the sea, on riverbanks, in boats, on trains; panoramic views, ceremonies, parades, funeral processions, etc. In short, they have replaced the *documentary photographs* that used to be taken by portable photographic cameras with *animated documentary photographs*. After at first taking very simple subjects, astonishing solely because of the novelty of *movement* in photographic prints which had always been frozen and immobile, cameramen today, by travelling throughout the entire world, present extremely interesting spectacles that we can watch without putting ourselves out. They show us countries that we probably have not seen, along with their costumes, animals, streets, inhabitants, and customs—all rendered with a photographic fidelity. The landscapes of India, Canada, Algeria, China, and Russia, the waterfalls, the snow-covered countries and their sports, the misty or sun-drenched regions, everything has been filmed

for the pleasure of people who do not like to put themselves out. There are many cameramen who specialize in this kind of work because it is the easiest. To have an excellent instrument, to be a good photographic cameraman, to know how to choose a vantage point, to be unafraid of travelling, and to move heaven and earth to obtain the authorizations that are often necessary are the sole qualifications required in this branch of the industry. That is unquestionably a great deal, but we will see further on that all this is only the basis of the art form. Every photographer can take views from nature, but not everyone can compose scenes.

SCIENTIFIC VIEWS

Very soon after the appearance of animated photographs, several people had the idea of using the cinematograph to record anatomical studies of human and animal movement on film. Before the invention of the cinematograph properly speaking, M. Marey had already succeeded in photographing a bird in flight and a horse galloping with truly extraordinary results by decomposing the movement with the assistance of a photographic apparatus with many lenses.[1] Today, thanks to the cinematograph, the automatic instrument par excellence, this is a mere game everyone can play. Others have attached microscopes to the cinematograph and presented us with enlargements of the workings of infinitely tiny creatures that are very curious to watch. Finally, others have availed themselves of the cinematograph to record and reproduce the surgical operations of a master for a specialized audience of students, or to provide them with practical lessons about glass blowing, steam or electric machine components in movement, pottery-making, and all sorts of diverse industries. Strictly speaking, this special branch of cinematography could be placed in the category of natural views, since the cameraman limits himself, as in the first case, to filming what is happening in front of him, except in those cases involving microscopic studies that require special instruments and know-how. But in any case, one must not silently ignore this cinematographic specialty.

COMPOSED SUBJECTS OR SCENIC GENRES

All subjects, of any sort, in which action is readied as it is in the theater and performed by the actors in front of the camera may be placed in a single category. The varieties within this category are innumerable; it includes comic skits, comic operas, burlesques and comedies, peasant stories, the so-called chase scenes, clown acts, acrobatic acts, graceful, artistic, or exotic dance turns, ballets, operas, stage plays, religious scenes, scabrous subjects, plastic tableaux, war scenes, newsreels, reproductions of news items, accident reports, catastrophes, crimes, assassinations, etc.—many more than I can list—as well as the most somber tragedies. The cinemat-

ographic realm knows no bounds; all subjects that the imagination can provide are suitable, and it seizes upon them. It is especially this category and the following one that have given immortality to the cinematograph because the subjects conceived by the imagination are infinitely varied and inexhaustible.

THE SO-CALLED TRANSFORMATION VIEWS

I now come to the category of cinematographic views exhibitors call *transformation views*. I find this trade name, however, unsuitable. Since I myself created this special area, I think I may say that the term *fantastic views* would be far more accurate. For if a certain number of these views in fact include scene changes, metamorphoses, or transformations, there are also a large number without transformations. They have instead many trick effects of theatrical machinery, mise-en-scène, optical illusions, and a wide range of processes that can only be called *trick shots*, hardly an academic term, but one that has no equivalent in refined discourse. Whatever the case may be, this category's domain is by far the most extensive, for it encompasses everything from natural views (documentary [*non-préparées*] or contrived [*truquées*] although shot outdoors) to the most imposing theatrical performances. It includes all the illusions that can be produced by prestidigitation, optics, photographic tricks, set design and theatrical machinery, the play of light, dissolves (*dissolving views*[2] as the English have called them), and the entire arsenal of fantastic, magical compositions that turn the most intrepid into madmen. With no intention of disparaging the first two categories, I am nevertheless going to speak soley about the latter two for the very simple reason that there I shall be entirely on home ground and able, consequently, to expound them with full knowledge of the facts. Since the day—and this goes back ten years—when countless producers of cinematographic views began to throw themselves into the making of outdoor views and comic scenes, whether good, bad, or excellent, I abandoned the simplest types and specialized in subjects whose interest lies in their difficulty of execution. To these I have exclusively devoted my efforts.

Cinematographic art offers such a variety of pursuits, it demands so much work of all kinds, and requires such sustained attention that I sincerely do not hesitate to proclaim it the most enticing and most interesting of the arts, for it makes use of almost all of them. Dramatic techniques, drawing, painting, sculpture, architecture, mechanical skills, manual labor of all sorts—all are employed in equal measure in this extraordinary profession. The amazement of those who have happened to watch part of our work always affords me the utmost pleasure and amusement.

The same phrase invariably comes to their lips: "Really, its extraordinary! I never imagined that so much space and material were needed, that

so much work was required to obtain these views! I didn't have any idea at all of how they were made."

Alas, afterwards they know little more, for one has to put, as they say, one's nose to the grindstone, and for a long time, for a thorough knowledge of the innumerable difficulties to be surmounted in a profession in which everything, even the seemingly impossible, is realized, and the most fanciful dreams are given the semblance of reality. Finally, needless to say, one must absolutely realize the impossible, since one photographs it and renders it visible.

THE SHOOTING STUDIO

For the special kind of view that concerns us, a studio has to be contrived ad hoc. Briefly, it combines a photographic studio (in gigantic scale) with a theatrical stage. The structure is made of iron and glass. The cabin of the camera operator is located at one end, while at the other end, a stage is situated, constructed exactly like one in a theater and fitted with trapdoors, scenery slots, and uprights. Of course, on each side of the stage there are wings with storerooms for sets, and behind it there are dressing rooms for the artists and extras. The stage includes a lower section containing the workings for the trapdoors and buffers necessary for the appearances and disappearances of the diabolical gods in fairy plays (*féeries*), and slips in which flats can be collapsed during scene changes. Overhead, there is a grate with the rollers and winches needed for maneuvers requiring power (flying characters or vehicles, oblique flights of angels, fairies, or swimmers, etc., etc.). Special rollers help to move the canvas panoramas; electric projectors help to light and to intensify the ghosts. We have, in short, a quite faithful, small-scale likeness of a *théâtre de féerie*. The stage is about thirty-two feet wide with an additional nine feet of wings upstage and downstage. The length of the whole, from the forestage to the camera, is fifty-five feet. Outside, there are iron hangars for the construction of wooden props, sets, etc. . . . and a series of storerooms for the construction materials, props, and costumes.

LIGHTING WITH DAYLIGHT AND ARTIFICIAL LIGHT

The ceiling of the studio is glazed partly with frosted glass and partly with regular glass. In summer, when the sun strikes the sets through the windows, the results could be disastrous because the shadows of the roof's iron beams can be conspicuous on the backdrops below. Moving shutters operated by wires which permit them simultaneously to be opened and closed in the wink of an eye protect against this problem. The frames of these shutters are trimmed with tracing paper (of the kind architects use for drawing their plans); when closed, these provide a softly filtered light

similar to that of frosted glass. Even lighting is extremely difficult to obtain during the performance of a scene which sometimes lasts four consecutive hours and more for a subject that, when projected, lasts two to four minutes. When it is cloudy, and the accursed black cumulus clouds take pleasure in constantly crossing in front of the sun, the photographer's friend, exasperation is quick to manifest itself in the one who directs the cameramen, assistants, mechanics, actors, and extras. One must have patience for every sort of ordeal; sometimes, it is better to wait for daylight to return; sometimes one ought rather to close the shutters if there is too much light or to open them if there is not enough, and one must do all this without losing sight of a thousand details inhering in the work in progress. If I am not crazy by now, I probably never will be, because overly bright, cloudy, and hazy skies have tried my patience severely . . . and during my career they have caused innumerable failures along with enormous costs; every tableau that must be started over or is impossible to perform because the bad weather disconcerts the actors, doubles, triples, or quadruples its price, depending on whether you try it two, three, or four more times. I have watched scenes, the ballet *Faust* among others, which have been performed over the course of eight straight days, but last only two-and-a-half minutes and cost 3,200 francs. There's something to make you angry about.

After much groping, and even though it was often said to be impossible, I have recently succeeded in setting up artificial lighting by using special electric equipment consisting of battens, track lights, and props, similar to those in theaters. These completely create the effect of daylight and in the future will eventually protect me from the sore trials of the past. God be praised! I will not go mad . . . at least on account of the clouds. . . . Diffuse light is achieved with the help of a large number of arc lamps and mercury-vapor tubes combined. This artificial light is used at the same time as daylight, and its intensity varies according to need.

THE COMPOSITION AND PREPARATION OF SCENES

Composing a scene, a play, a drama, a fairy play, a comedy, or an artistic tableau naturally calls for the creation of a scenario drawn from the imagination and then a search for the effects that will bring it off for the audience; creating sketches and models of the sets and costumes; finding the chief attraction without which no view has a chance of success. As far as illusions or fairy plays are concerned, the invention, combination, and outlines of the tricks and the preliminary study of their construction requires special care. The mise-en-scène as well as the movements of the extras and the placement of the production crew are also arranged in advance. The work is absolutely analogous to readying a play in the theater, but with this

difference: the author must know how to work out everything by himself on paper, and consequently he must be the author [scriptwriter], director, designer, and often an actor if he wants to obtain a unified whole. The person who devises the scene ought to direct, for it is absolutely impossible to make it succeed if ten different people get involved. Above all, one must know exactly what one wants and go over the roles that each will have to perform. One must not lose sight of the fact that one does not rehearse for three months as in the theater, but only for a quarter of an hour at most. If you lose time, the light goes down—and goodbye photography. Everything, especially the stumbling blocks to be avoided during the performance, must be anticipated. In the scenes requiring machines there are many.

THE SETS

The sets are produced by following a chosen model; they are constructed in wood and cloth in a workshop adjoining the shooting studio and painted in distemper like theatrical sets, except that the painting is executed exclusively in grisaille through all the intermediate gradations of gray between black and pure white.[3] This gives them the look of funerary decorations, with a strange effect on those seeing them for the first time. Colored sets come out very badly. Blue becomes white, reds, greens, and yellows become black; a complete destruction of the effects ensues. It is therefore necessary that sets be painted like photographers' backdrops. The painting, unlike that of theatrical sets, is very carefully done. The finish, the correctness of the perspective, the trompe l'oeil skillfully executed to tie the painting to real objects just as in panoramas[4]—all is needed to give an appearance of truth to the entirely artificial things that the camera will photograph with absolute precision. Anything poorly made will be faithfully reproduced by the camera and you must therefore keep your eyes peeled and produce the sets with meticulous care. I only know this: in material matters, the cinematograph must do better than the theater and it must not accept conventional practices.

THE PROPS

Props are made of wood, cardboard, flour, molded pasteboard, and dirt, or ordinary objects can simply be used. But if you want to get the best photographic results, the best thing to do, even for the sofas, chimneys, tables, furniture, candelabra, clocks, etc., is exclusively to use specially made objects that have been painted in carefully graduated shades of gray depending on the nature of the object. Important films are often colored by hand before they are projected, but if the objects are bronze, mahogany, red, yellow, or green, this would not be possible because they become deep black

and consequently not transparent when photographed; therefore they cannot be made sufficiently translucent for projection. That's something the public is generally unaware of, and they certainly do not suspect how much time and care it takes to make all these props which merely seem to be ordinary objects.

THE COSTUMES

For the same reason, most costumes must be specially made in tones that photograph well and that can later be colored. That is why it is necessary to have an enormous store of costumes of all sorts, from all periods and countries, and of different qualities, along with their accessories, not to mention the hats, wigs, weapons, and jewels belonging to the greatest lords or to the filthiest bums. The store of costumes, however large it may be, is always inadequate. Even with ten thousand costumes in our current repertoire, one is obliged from time to time to go to theatrical costumers to complete the set, for example, when many similar costumes are needed, primarily in parades or in processions with many performers. Naturally, costumers and workers who repair and maintain them are necessary; the same is true for the linens and the tights, the shoes and the equipment.

THE ACTORS AND EXTRAS

Contrary to general belief, it is very difficult to find good performers for the cinematograph. An actor of excellence in the theater, even a star, is worth absolutely nothing in a cinematographic scene. Often professional mimes are bad because they perform in pantomime according to conventional principles, just like mimes in a ballet who have a special, immediately recognizable performance style. Though very superior in their specialty, these artists are disconcerted as soon as they come into contact with the cinematograph. This is because cinematographic miming requires training and special qualities. No longer is there an audience for the actor to address, either verbally or with gestures. The camera alone is spectator, and nothing is worse than to look at it and to concern oneself with it while performing, which is what invariably happens at first to actors accustomed to the stage but not to the cinematograph. The actor must realize that, while remaining completely silent, he must make himself understood by the deaf spectators who watch him. His performance must be unostentatious and very expressive, with few gestures, but ones that are very distinct and clear. Perfection of facial expression and great accuracy of pose are indispensable. I have seen numerous scenes performed by well-known actors; they were not good because the principal element of their success, the word, was not available in the cinematograph. Accustomed to speaking well in the theater, they used gestures only as an accessory to speech, while

in the cinematograph, the word is nothing and the gesture is everything. Nevertheless, some, Galipaux among others,[5] have made some good scenes. Why? Because he is accustomed to using solo pantomime during his monologues, and he is endowed with a very expressive face. He knows how to make himself understood without speaking, and his movements, even if deliberately exaggerated—which is necessary in pantomime and especially in photographed pantomime—are always appropriate. When accompanying his speech, an actor's gesture is very telling, but it is no longer comprehensible when he mimes. If you say, "I am thirsty," in the theater, you do not close your hand and bring your thumb to your mouth to simulate a bottle. It's completely useless since everyone understood that you are thirsty; but in pantomime, you are obviously obliged to make this gesture.

That's all quite simple, isn't it? And yet, nine times out of ten, this does not work for anyone not accustomed to miming. Nothing can be improvised; everything must be learned. It is also advisable to consider how the camera will render a gesture. In a photograph, the characters overlap each other, and the greatest care must always be taken to make the principal characters stand out and to moderate the fervor of the supporting characters who are always inclined to gesticulate at the wrong time. This produces a jumble of bustling people in the photograph. The audience no longer knows whom to look at and no longer understands any of the action. The phases of action must be successive, not simultaneous. The actors must consequently pay attention and perform only in turn, at the precise moment when their participation becomes necessary. There is one more thing that I have very often had difficulty in making clear to performers who are always inclined to show off and get themselves noticed to the great detriment of the action and the whole; generally speaking, they are too spontaneous. How much tact is needed to moderate their excessive spontaneity without offending them! Strange as it may seem, each performer in the rather numerous troupe that I employ has been chosen from twenty or thirty I have tested in succession before obtaining what was needed, even though all were very fine artists in the Parisian theaters in which they worked.

Not everyone has the necessary qualities, and good will, unfortunately, does not replace those qualities. Those who have them take quickly to the task; others never do. Female performers who are good at mime are rare. Many are fine, intelligent, beautiful women, but when they must mime a somewhat difficult scene, woe is me! A thousand times woe! Those who have never witnessed the tribulations of a director have never seen anything. I hasten to add that there are, very fortunately, exceptional cases of women who perform very gracefully and intelligently. Conclusion: forming a good cinematographic troupe is a long and difficult business. Only

those with no concern for art satisfy themselves with first comers playing a confusing and uninteresting scene.

TRICK EFFECTS

It is impossible in this already long talk to explain in detail the execution of cinematographic tricks. That would require a special study; moreover, practice alone clarifies the details of the processes used, some involving unheard of difficulties. I can say without bragging, since all those in the profession are well aware of this, that it was I myself who successively discovered all the so-called "mysterious" processes of the cinematograph. The producers of composed scenes have all more or less followed the beaten path, and one of them, the head of the world's largest cinematographic company (considered from the viewpoint of its huge, low-cost production), told me himself: "It is thanks to you that the cinematograph has managed to sustain itself and to become an unprecedented success. By joining animated photographs with the theater, that is, with an infinite variety of subjects, you prevented its decline, which would otherwise have rapidly occurred with outdoor scenes whose inevitable uniformity would have quickly bored the audience."

Without false modesty, I confess that this glory—if glory it is—pleases me most. Do you want to know how the idea of applying trick effects in cinematography first came to me? Very simply, upon my word. One day, when I was photographing as usual at the Place de l'Opéra, the camera I used at the beginning (a primitive one in which the film tore or frequently caught and refused to advance) jammed and produced an unexpected result; a minute was needed to disengage the film and to make the camera work again. During this minute, the passersby, a horse trolley, and the vehicles had, of course, changed positions. In projecting the strip, rejoined at the point of the break, I suddenly saw a Madeleine-Bastille trolley change into a hearse and men changed into women.

The substitution trick, called the stop-motion trick, had been discovered and, two days later, I produced the first metamorphoses of men into women and the first sudden disappearances which at first had such great success. It was thanks to this very simple trick that I made the first fairy plays, *The Devil's Manor*, *The Devil in the Convent*, *Cinderella*, etc. . . . One trick led to another. Even before this new type was successful, I used my ingenuity to find new techniques and I conceived in turn of the fade (obtained by a special device in the photographic camera), appearances, disappearances, metamorphoses obtained by superimpositions on black grounds or on sections set aside in the sets; then came superimpositions on white grounds that had already been exposed (something everyone declared to be impossible before they saw it), realized with the help of a stratagem I

cannot discuss because imitators have not yet entirely discovered its secret. Then came the tricks with cut-off heads, the doubling of characters, of scenes performed by a single character who through doubling ends by portraying all by himself up to ten similar characters performing a comedy with each other. Finally, using my special knowledge of illusions acquired through twenty-five years of practice at the Théâtre Robert-Houdin, I introduced mechanical, optical, and prestidigitation tricks, etc., to the cinematograph. With all these methods combined and competently used, I do not hesitate to say that in cinematography it is today possible to realize the most impossible and improbable things.

I will conclude by saying that much to my chagrin the simplest tricks are those that make the greatest impact, while those achieved through superimposition, which are much more difficult, are hardly appreciated except by those who understand the problems involved. Among others, the views performed by a single actor in which the film is successively exposed up to ten consecutive times in the camera, are so difficult that they become a veritable Chinese water torture. The actor, playing different scenes ten times, must remember precisely to the second, while the film is running, what he was doing at the same instant in earlier takes and the exact location where he was in the scene. On the one hand, this condition alone allows performances by ten actors (who are really one and the same) to be attuned with each other; and, on the other hand, if during one of the takes an actor makes an untoward gesture, if his arm moves in front of a character photographed in the preceding take, it will be transparent and *out of focus*, which *wrecks* the trick. You can see from this just how difficult it is and how angry you get when, after three or four hours of work and sustained attention, a tear rips through the film after the seventh or eighth superimposition, forcing you to abandon the film and do everything over again since it is impossible to repair a film containing a break in which the image is still latent and which cannot be developed until the tenth and last superimposition is recorded.

This is perhaps all "Greek" to the uninitiated, but I repeat that more detailed explanations would lead us too far astray.

In any case, it is the trick, used in the most intelligent manner, that allows the supernatural, the imaginary, even the impossible to be rendered visually and produces truly artistic tableaux that provide a veritable pleasure for those who understand that all branches of art contribute to their realization.

TAKING THE VIEWS: THE CAMERAMAN

Needless to say, the cameraman for this special genre of views must be highly trained and very much au courant with a host of little tricks of the

trade. A difficult sort of view such as an execution cannot be taken by a beginner. He would invariably ruin the most easily achieved tricks if he forgets even the smallest thing while turning the crank. A mistake in cranking, forgetting a number while counting out loud during a take, a second's distraction can make everything go wrong. A calm, attentive, thoughtful man capable of withstanding all annoyances and tensions is what is needed because annoyances and tensions are practically inevitable while taking views with the almost continual problems and innumerable unpleasant surprises. These observations will make you understand why the taking of fantastic views is so problematic, whether caused by the director, the mechanics, the actors, or the cameraman taking the shot. It is hardly an easy thing to be in perfect agreement, to get everyone's attention, and to cooperate precisely all the while necessarily fighting against material problems of all sorts.

This will suffice to explain why after having thrown themselves into the new genre the majority of photographers have given it up. One needs someone more than a simple cameraman for all this; and, if there are innumerable cinematographers, those who have succeeded in doing something different than the others are far less numerous. No more than one per country, even less, since every country in the world is dependent on French producers for artistic views. . . .

The cinematograph has today become a colossal industry employing more than 80,000 people in different parts of the world. That's hard to believe but a fact nonetheless, and its success only grows stronger every day. Why? Because an interesting spectacle is an irresistible attraction in every country, and because the cinematograph has provided superb spectacles of this kind in all those countries lacking theaters and other distractions at an affordable price, since the *impresario*, once he has paid for the piece, doesn't have to pay the performers every day.

Oh, if it could only be like this for theater directors!!! But that's the way it is. Only the artists who have performed coolly and flawlessly in cinematographic views are as happy. Their performances cannot be uneven, good one day and bad the next; if they perform well at the *premiere*, they will be excellent in perpetuity. What an advantage!!!

GEORGES MÉLIÈS (1861–1938) was director of the Théâtre Robert-Houdin, the foremost magic theater in Paris, from 1888 to 1914. In December, 1895, he attended the first film screening of the Lumière brothers, and over the next eighteen years his company, Star Films, produced more than one thousand short films, first at his theater (where they were also screened) and then at a film studio that he built at Montreuil-sous-bois.

[1] Etienne-Jules Marey (1830–1904) was a celebrated physiologist and professor at the College de France, who experimented with such precinematographic recording devices as the photographic gun and chronophotography in his studies of human and animal movement.

[2] English in the original—TRANS.

[3] Orthochromatic filmstock was sensitive to the purple-to-green portion of the spectrum, so that objects in these colors showed up as white or light gray on film. It was not sensitive, however, to yellow and red, and objects in these colors showed up as dark gray or even black.

[4] For a description of the historical precedents for such panoramas and of the ways in which real objects were linked with large-scale projected images, see L.J.M. Daguerre, *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Daguerreotype and the Diorama* (New York: Winter House, 1971); see, also, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim, *L.J.M. Daguerre* (New York: Dover, 1968).—TRANS.

[5] Félix Galipaux was a popular music hall actor who, with Coquelin Cadet, created a vogue for monologue performances in the 1880s. According to Jacques Deslandes, Galipaux first performed for the camera in 1896–1897 when Emile Reynaud produced a film of *Le Premier Cigare*, one of Galipaux's well-known music hall routines—see Deslandes, *Histoire comparée du cinéma*, vol. 1 (Paris: Casterman, 1966), 297–98. Galipaux later appeared in films by Zecca and in a number of Méliès's films, including *An Adventurous Automobile Trip* (1905). According to Georges Sadoul, Galipaux also starred in some of the first sound films produced in France by Pathé, including *La Lettre* and *Au Telephone* (1905)—see Sadoul, *Histoire générale du cinéma*, vol. 2 (Paris: Denoël, 1948), 459.—TRANS.

RÉMY DE GOURMONT, "Epilogues: Cinematograph"

From "Epilogues: Cinématographe," *Mercure de France* (1 September 1907), 124–27.

DOES THE CINEMA pose a threat to the theater, at least the kind that is principally a spectacle which appeals to the eyes? Probably so. Cinematographic photography has all the splendid charm of static photography. The one has almost eliminated engraving; the other has almost taken the place of the spectacles performed directly by human figures. The cinema does not merely provide a more than adequate and inexpensive reproduction of such organized spectacles; it reproduces (that is, in the best conditions) panoramic spectacles, whether natural (such as landscapes) or contrived (such as a hippopotamus hunt—posed certainly, but posed on the very banks of the Upper Nile with the local people and animals performing in their own environment).[1] The best theater machinery would cost hundreds of thousands of francs just to produce the caricature of such a hunt. The cinema renders landscapes marvelously. Yesterday it showed me the Rocky Mountains and the Zambezi Falls: the wind bent the fir trees on the mountains; the water sprang up at the bottom of the falls. I saw life stirring. At the Zambezi, a small bush, partially caught in a whirlpool, wavered constantly on the brink of the abyss; and its trembling, come from such a distance away, inspired in me a strange emotion. I became entranced by this battle; when they give us a new view of this spectacular foaming falls, I will be looking for that bush which is courageously resisting the force of the water: perhaps it will have been vanquished, or perhaps it will have become a tree.

from Rediscovering French Film, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1983.

Louis Feuillade and the Serial / *Richard Roud*

Given the mechanically reproducible nature of film as a medium and the enormous popularity of Louis Feuillade's films in their time, it hardly seems possible that a director of the stature of Feuillade could so totally have disappeared from the history of the cinema for so many years. In France he was remembered as the director of *Judex* (1916) and a few other serials, but until the first Cinémathèque Française revival of *Fantômas* (1913) in 1944, he was never considered one of the great figures of the French cinema.

In Great Britain Feuillade was completely unknown; in America, Feuillade's name does not appear in the *New York Times Index to Film Reviews* until 1965, when *Les Vampires* was screened at the New York Film Festival.

There are many reasons for this eclipse. First of all, Feuillade was a victim of his very popularity: the enormous success of his films militated against his being taken seriously as an artist. Secondly, his career did suffer a decline after 1919, and in the six remaining years of his life he was never able to equal either the success or the genius of *Les Vampires, Tih Minh* (1918) and *Barrabas* (1920). Furthermore, the cinema was undergoing great changes at this period: by the early '20s the French had discovered Griffith, and his dynamic montage—totally absent from the films of Feuillade—became the touchstone for a new generation of film critics.

It is no accident, I think, that the Feuillade revival of the mid-40s coincided both with the rediscovery of location shooting in the Italian neo-realist cinema and also with the new interest—sparked off by the European release of Orson Welles's first two films—in composition, in depth, and the concomitant critical downgrading of montage.

The first French avant-garde movement looked upon Feuillade as precisely the sort of commercial filmmaker they were fighting against. Louis Delluc's judgment was unconditional: "*Judex* and *The New Mission of Judex* are more serious crimes than those which are condemned by courts-martial."[1]

The only voices raised in defense of Feuillade during the '20s were those of a few surrealist writers—and the young Buñuel. Georges Sadoul remembered Buñuel telling him how much he loathed the films of the "avant-garde movement" and all the techniques that were fashionable in the '20s—rapid cutting, superimpositions, and photographic effects.[2] His models, he told Sadoul, were *Fantômas* and *Les Vampires,* direct translations, without any *chichi,* of *une réalité insolite.* But the irony, Sadoul tells us, was that "like all of us, he didn't even know the name of the director of those films." There was to have been a gala, organized by the surrealists, to render homage to René Cresté (*Judex*) and to Musidora (Irma Vep of *Les Vampires*) but not to Feuillade, who was an anonymous figure. In any case, the gala never took place, but a play, *The Treasure of the Jesuits,* was written by Louis Aragon and André Breton in which the following lines appear: "Since you're interested in the cinematograph, I am going to introduce you to the apotheosis of a forgotten *genre.* Soon it will be generally understood that there is nothing more realistic and at the same time more poetic than those serials which the intellectuals used to make fun of. It is in *The Perils of Pauline,* it is in *Les Vampires* that one must look for the great reality of this century—beyond fashion, beyond taste."[3]

As Henri Langlois put it, the surrealists *had* to admire Feuillade, since surrealism already existed in the cinema before the actual surrealist movement began: "One only has to take *Les Vampires* to see that the cinema, because it was an expression of the twentieth century and of its universal subconscious, bore the essence of surrealism within it."[4]

In fact, the surrealists were able to appreciate the very elements in Feuillade's work that others reproached him with: his use of the serial format and his taste for melodrama. Indeed, Feuillade cannot be defended without at the same time making a case for melodrama. But before tackling that problem, we should first see how Feuillade came to the cinema.

Feuillade was born in 1873 in southern France, and grew up in a very religious family who insisted on his attending church-supported schools. Once he got his *baccalauréat,* he enlisted in a cavalry regiment without

Adapted from *Cinema: A Critical Dictionary, the Major Film-Makers,* vol. 1, Richard Roud, ed. Copyright © 1980 Viking Press, New York, and Secker & Warburg, London

waiting to be called up for military service, and spent four years in the army. On leaving, he married and followed his father and brothers into the wine trade. In his spare time, however, he enjoyed amateur theatricals and was an *aficionado* of bullfights. After the deaths of his parents, he decided to leave for Paris, where a friend found him a job in a newspaper office. His journalistic career ended in 1905; a friend had introduced him to the artistic director of Pathé, and he began to write scenarios. The Pathé connection didn't work out, however, so Feuillade went directly to Gaumont, where he was received by the legendary Alice Guy-Blaché. Initially Léon Gaumont's secretary, she had become the first woman director in the history of the cinema, and was the artistic director of Gaumont.

She liked Feuillade's scripts, and one of them, *Le Coup de Vent,* was filmed by Etienne Arnaud in 1905. Two years later, she left Paris to follow her husband, who had just taken over the Berlin office of Gaumont, and she persuaded Gaumont to let Feuillade replace her. From 1907 he was in charge of hiring directors, buying scripts, choosing stars, and at the same time directing his own films. Francis Lacassin tells us that at the end of his life, Feuillade reckoned he had written at least 800 scripts, of which he had directed 700.[5] One must remember that his earlier films were very short: one- or two-reelers. The early years, from 1905 to 1908, saw Feuillade turning out comedies. The historical series began in 1909, and the *Film Esthétique* in 1910, but he continued to make comedies, in particular the series devoted to Bébé, a child actor. Feuillade first became famous through his series of films under the high-sounding title *La Vie Telle Qu'Elle Est (Life as It Is).*

This laudable effort at neo-realism, we are told, came about largely through the need for economy: Pathé, as always, was Gaumont's great competitor, and Feuillade always wanted to turn out better films more cheaply than they could. And when Gaumont told him that a Danish company (Nordisk) was making films for no more than 6.50 francs a meter negative costs, he declared that he could do it for only 6 francs a meter.

And he did, and some of them are very good, although they have more to do with melodrama than with realism—at least insofar as their plots are concerned. One of the earliest and most beautiful is *La Tare* (1911). The story is pure corn: a kind doctor gives a young woman in Paris attached to a wastrel a chance of redeeming herself through hard work in an orphanage. Alas, her Parisian friend tracks her down, and when it is revealed to the trustees of the institution that her earlier life had not been blameless, she is thrown out. She cannot find work, and is close to suicide. In an extraordinary shot, Feuillade shows her in her attic room, with a bright shaft of light cutting the room in two; she goes to the window, climbs onto the sill and is poised there ready to jump when her despairing face is illuminated by the bright sunshine. She hesitates, and then falls back into the semi-dark room. The film leaves her there, her head bowed in misery. Although the plot is melodramatic, the treatment is restrained, and one can already see in this early work that extraordinary combination of realistic treatment and melodramatic subject that was to be the hallmark of Feuillade's oeuvre.

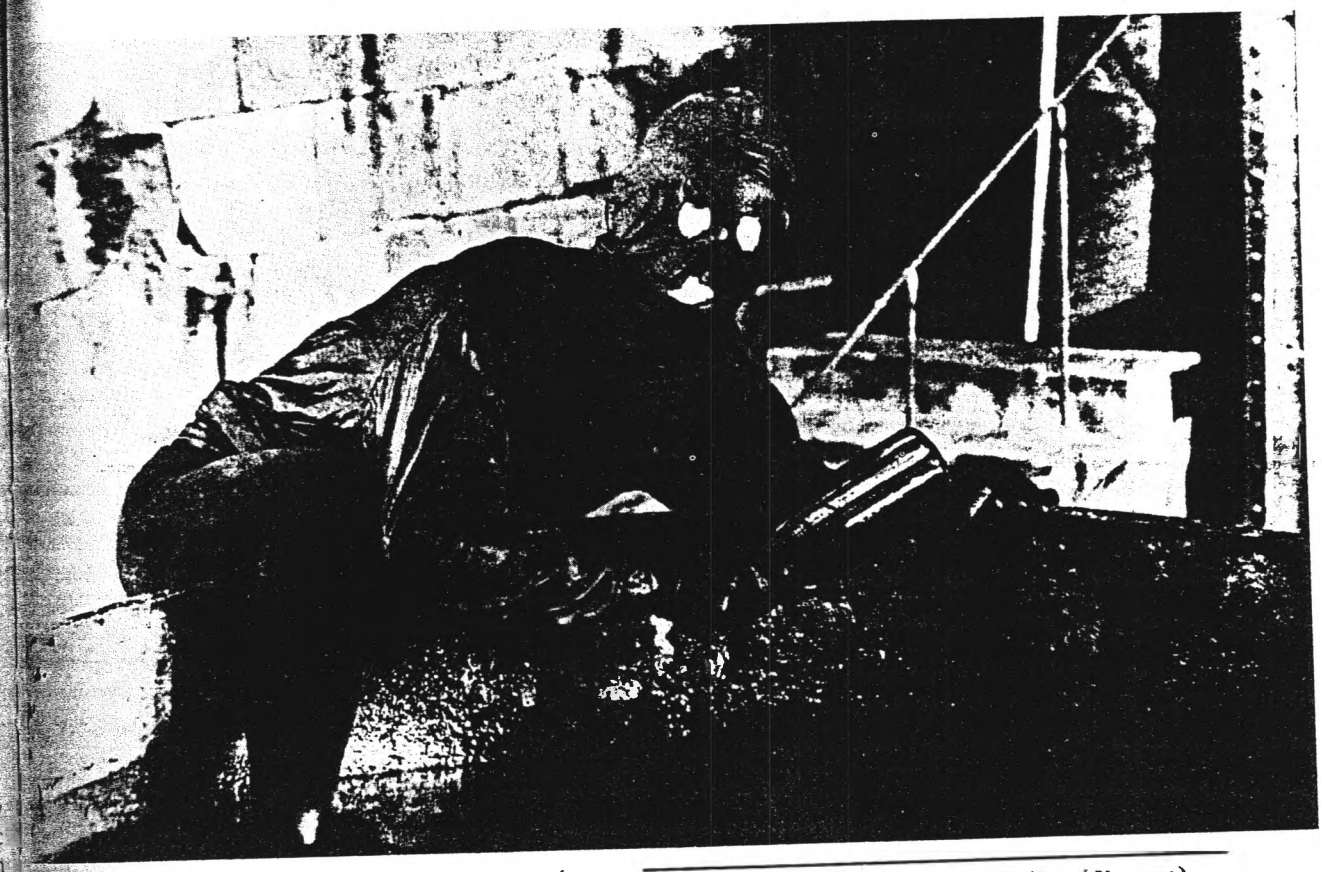
There is one tiny, tentative camera movement in the film (which only runs for 900 meters)—a lateral pan from the waiting room of an employment agency to the office. One can almost see Feuillade, having done it once, thinking, well, let's do it again; and so having moved from left to right, haltingly we go back from right to left. But Feuillade's compositions were and remained almost exclusively in depth. One could call it a theatrical point of view, if it were not for the fact that there has seldom been a director who could so escape theatrical perspective through the use of light and the movements of his characters.

In the same year as *La Tare,* 1911, two authors, Marcel Allain and Pierre Souvestre, wrote the first installments of the story of the master-criminal *Fantômas.* "In 32 volumes," as Lacassin put it, "and in 32 months, they thrilled a whole generation."[6] And in 1913 Feuillade captured the imagination of the world with the first three parts of his five-part film of *Fantômas.*

"It is to be hoped," wrote T.S. Eliot, "that some scholarly and philosophic critic of the present generation may be inspired to write a book on the history and aesthetic of melodrama. . . . Those who have lived before such terms as 'high-brow fiction,' 'thrillers' and 'detective fiction' were invented realize that melodrama is perennial and must be satisfied . . . the frontier of drama and melodrama is vague; the difference is largely a matter of emphasis; perhaps no drama has ever been greatly and permanently successful without a large melodramatic element. What is the difference between *The Frozen Deep* and *Oedipus the King*? It is the difference between coincidence, set without shame or pretense, and fate which merges into character."[7]

Eliot wrote this in 1927, in an essay called "Wilkie Collins and Dickens." But the surrealists already saw the matter in a different light—as, I think, do most of us today. The main objection to melodramatic novels was that they depended too much on chance and coincidence. On the other hand, both the surrealists and we who have been exposed to the Theater of the Absurd feel that it is precisely the aleatory nature of the plots—the chance occurrences—which make melodrama more "true to life" than the classical canons of character and verisimilitude ever did. The surrealists spoke of the encounter of a sewing-machine and an umbrella on an operating table as being the essence of art, and some of Feuillade's (and Allain and Souvestre's) juxtapositions were equally hair-raising, equally absurd, equally meaningful.

The roots of *Fantômas* were double: both literary and political. The nineteenth century was, in Western



***Fantômas*, 1913-14, Louis Feuillade (René Navarre)**

rope, at least, the century of universal literacy. But when the illiterate learned to read, they did not want to read Racine or Corneille. And a whole new genere of literature appeared. At its grandest, it was Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* and *Notre Dame de Paris*. But underneath the lyricism the principles of melodrama were present. An even greater success was Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* (and the connection between the three-volume shocker and the cinema was clearly made when *The Exploits of Elaine* was retitled by the French as *Les Mystères de New York*). These were the world's first great best-sellers. (When it is said that great literature was popular in its time, it should always be remembered that this only means that it was popular with the ten per cent of the population who knew how to read. These authors—Hugo, Sue, and Dickens, of course—were really read by the masses.)

Fantômas was the first anti-hero, the first evil hero. To be sure, he had an opponent—Juve—who stood for "good," but there was no doubt in any reader's mind as to which was the more interesting, the more fascinating character. Both the novel and the film of *Fantômas* are glorifications of evil, and one can only speculate as to the reasons why such a hero should appear in 1911 and why he should have been so popular. There is a connection, I think, with the exploits of the *Bande à Bonnet* and other anarchist gangs that were terrorizing—and fascinating—France at the time.

The middle classes were terrified of these men, who indeed constituted a threat to authority and even more to property; at the same time, there was a kind of *Schadenfreude*: a thrill at the thought of the retribution which they perhaps felt they deserved. The reaction of the working classes must have been difficult; they had less to lose and therefore they could simply enjoy the sight of the rich being terrorized.

Today the Fantômas novels seem almost unreadable, whereas the film remains eminently viewable, for the obvious reason that Feuillade was a master of images and Allain and Souvestre were not great prose-writers. However, I don't think that one can separate Feuillade's visual style from his material, and say that the one was great and the other lamentable. If you like the one, you have to take the other. This was not true, as we have seen, with early films like *La Tare*. But it is the sudden introduction of evil into Feuillade's work that provided the stimulus for his talent. All his best films—*Fantômas, Les Vampires, Tih Minh,* and *Barrabas*—are involved with it. Whenever he tried to be moralistic, the films lost much of their force. The reason for this lies in the tensions set up in Feuillade between his consciously held views (we know that he was both a Catholic and a monarchist) and the fascination he found in women like Irma Vep and men like Fantômas.

Obviously Feuillade could not consciously either approve of or identify with a master-thief like Fantômas, and yet the film can only be seen as a glorification of this evil figure—this omnipotent, ubiquitous master of disguise. Surely it is significant that whenever Fantômas appears to us in action, he is covered from head to foot, with black tights and with a Ku-Klux-Klan slitted hood over his face. This is his disguise; it is also Feuillade's own disguise. And in the film's most famous shot, when Fantômas is seen as he blows up a house, it is with both arms raised in triumph and silhouetted against the smoke from the apocalyptic explosion.

What makes the film so believable is the all-important fact that it is shot in real exteriors. Or, as Annette Michelson aptly remarked about *Les Vampires,* this film, which is all about dislocation, is all shot on location: "Haussmann's pre-1914 Paris, the city of massive stone structures, of quiet avenues and squares, is suddenly revealed as everywhere dangerous, the scene and subject of secret designs. The trap-door, secret compartment, false tunnel, false bottom, false ceiling, form an architectural complex with the architectural structure of a middle-class culture. The perpetually recurring ritual of identification and self-justification is the presentation of the visiting card; it is, as well, the signal, the formal prelude to the fateful encounter, the swindle, hold-up, abduction or murder."[8]

This constant interplay between reassuring everyday appearance and the frightening realities which lie just below is the key to the fascination of all Feuillade's best work. He had a genius for location: the great sequence in *Fantômas* of the shoot-out on the Quai de Bercy with Juve and Fantômas darting between the huge wine-barrels is not merely picturesque. Somehow those barrels take on as much importance as the protagonists; indeed, from the way in which they are shot, they become as mysteriously threatening as some of Magritte's renderings of ordinary objects. And Feuillade's compositions in depth help because on their many levels he can best orchestrate the many levels of significance, disguise, and treachery.

What makes *Les Vampires* a greater work than *Fantômas* is the fact that it was written by Feuillade himself, and thus conceived entirely in cinematic terms. But there is still another reason, and that is the presence of the female character—Irma Vep (Musidora). Once again the subject of the film is a gang of jewel thieves; the nominal hero is not a policeman as in *Fantômas,* but a more ambiguous representative of law and order, a journalist who is determined to capture the gang. But in the first sequence of the film, a painting of a sphinx is pushed back from the wall of an apartment to reveal in the hole cut behind it the black-tighted Irma Vep—and suddenly we realize that the battle is going to be not only political or social, but sexual as well.

It soon becomes clear that this gang of jewel thieves is being pursued by Philippe Guérande with somewhat mixed motives. It is important that they are jewel thieves, that they prey only on the rich. But their method is not haphazard: they have organized a plot against constituted society; they are a potential revolutionary force, an underworld which is rising up to take over the "real" world. That Feuillade totally understood all this is unlikely, but his audiences did: a great wave of protest arose against what was termed his glamorization of crime. The fact that the gang was ultimately vanquished by the police did not deceive anyone. Audiences knew this was only a gesture or a kind of auto-censorship on the part of Feuillade. And it is significant, for example, that the high priestess of the Vampires is killed neither by the police nor by Guérande. It is the reporter's *wife* who guns her down, and in a giveaway shot the hero lingers longingly over her dead body in a vivid expression of the sexual attraction exercised by this dominating woman. It could also be an unconscious recognition of a society in love with its own destruction. When a large party of rich people are gassed by the Vampires, it is significant that the gas is sweet-smelling and that the guests at first think it must be some new kind of incense or perfume. And in the penultimate scenes of the film, when the Vampires think they have triumphed, Feuillade films their celebration, their witches' sabbath, with an enthusiasm and a conviction that more than border on the ambiguous.

For audiences today, the film recaptures the mystery and charm of a Paris long since gone: all the urban poetry of deserted streets, *terrains vagues,* half-finished buildings. This of course would not have had the same appeal to the earlier contemporary audience. But they got something else from the film—the thrill of seeing all these extraordinary and terrifying things happening in the streets they knew, that they walked down every day. For them (and in some measure for us, too) there was a conjugation of a naturalistic rendering of Paris with the evocation of strange and frightening happenings. This was Feuillade's great discovery: nothing can be more frightening than extraordinary events against a normal everyday background (Hitchcock has of course used this principle in many of his films, for example, the gunning at the crossroads by the "crop-duster" in *North by Northwest*). Fantasy is grounded in everyday reality, thus making it both more credible and more frightening.

If *Les Vampires* was the greatest of Feuillade's films there were two others, almost as good, to follow. But not immediately. The fact that one of the episodes of *Les Vampires* had been (temporarily) banned by the chief of police was enough to frighten Feuillade—and Gaumont. So the successor to *Les Vampires* was very carefully worked on to avoid offense. *Judex* was the result, and it turned out to be Feuillade's greatest success—perhaps because of its enlightening moral tone, but also because of its star, René Cresté. As Bardèche and Brasillach neatly put it: "Cresté's cape: that was *Judex* . . . the majestic cape which he threw back over his shoulder

***Fantômas*, 1913-14, Louis Feuillade**

***Les Vampires*, 1915-17, Louis Feuillade (Musidora)**

such a noble gesture. The rest was of little importance: the kidnapped girls, the highwaymen . . . there was nothing in *Judex* that was not already in *The Exploits of Elaine, The Perils of Pauline,* and even more in *Fantômas.* But there was that cape. Because of that cape, because of that fatal beauty, that smile, every young man in France dreamed of Judex."[9] Seen today, *Judex* almost founders in its self-imposed sentimental morality. And *La Nouvelle Mission de Judex* (1917) is unwatchable; Louis Delluc's strictures on Feuillade are justified by this film.

But Feuillade had not completely gone over to respectability; for the two Judex films were almost immediately followed by two serial films, *Tih Minh* and *Barrabas. Tih Minh,* as Francis Lacassin puts it, "leaves the gray streets of Paris for the Riviera, where the bright Mediterranean sun seems to efface the differences between good and evil. The Vampire gang are now bent on world conquest: the film is about their revenge for the death of Irma Vep, and their victim is Tih Minh, a beautiful Oriental maiden. Scenes like the fight on the roof of the Hotel Negresco possess that dreamlike evil magnificence which no one was ever able to achieve so completely as Louis Feuillade."[10]

And in this context it is illuminating to compare *Tih Minh* with Léonce Perret's masterpiece *L'Enfant de Paris.* Both are largely set on the Riviera, and both make magnificent use of their locations. But while Perret—and properly so, for his purposes—simply makes the Riviera look beautiful, Feuillade makes it sinister—or rather the sinister proceeds from the combination of the landscape and the "evil magnificence" of the subject. And there are strokes of pure genius—like the "rest home," the Villa Circe (Irma Vep is dead, but the name of the villa may be a reference to her powers) with its gardens haunted by ghostly forms in white, wandering phantoms, the "living dead": victims of the gang.

True, the film has an "improving" end: crime is punished; virtue has its reward. But the criminals are not all killed: Dolores de Santa Fé is taken alive, and the good doctor Clauzel takes her back to Paris to undertake the difficult mission of converting this adventuress and delivering her from the evil spirits. But she outsmarts him—somehow she had managed to procure poison from the wicked Asiatic doctor Kistna, and she escapes conversion through death.

Barrabas is the last of the great films and in many ways the best, except for its rather slow beginning. The plot of the film is so complex that it necessitated a great deal of exposition, in fact almost two hours of it. There are so many things we have to learn, to register, so that when Feuillade springs his trap, bottomless chasms can open metaphorically beneath the feet of his characters. But once the trap opens—and it is actually the fall of the blade of a guillotine which sets the infernal machine working—the pace never slackens. *Barrabas,* too, was largely shot on the Riviera, in the hills overlooking Nice. It achieves an even greater plastic beauty than *Tih Minh* and it is also more powerful. The aim of the criminals in *Tih Minh* was "God strike England"; in *Barrabas,* it is the whole world they are after, and the very title of the film, with its Biblical resonance, seems to suggest the eternal existence of an underworld, of the forces of evil.

Had his career ended with *Barrabas,* he might have

had a greater chance of survival; unfortunately his later films did little to enhance his reputation. *Vendémiaire* is about the only one that looks good today. Photographically, indeed, it is extremely beautiful, particularly the opening scenes of refugees from the north going down the river Rhone by ship. But the patriotic plot (German soldiers disguised as Belgians) is not terribly interesting, and already the signs of the series of tear-jerkers that Feuillade was to make from 1919 until his death in 1925 are there.

But, this being said, and although Feuillade sank into obscurity, he nevertheless did have an influence on the history of the cinema—even if it was a very delayed one. With the exception of Buñuel who, as we have seen, admired his work, and in *L'Age d'Or* and some of his other films continued the Feuillade vision of the extraordinary subject filmed as if it were the most ordinary thing imaginable, one must wait until the Feuillade revival of the '40s to see a direct influence of his work. It is most obvious in the work of Georges Franju and that of Alain Resnais. "Of course," Resnais has said, "I don't try systematically 'to be like Feuillade.'"[11] If you try to do it that way, it doesn't work. (And I, for one, think that this is the reason why Franju's *Judex* is much less authentically Feuilladesque than his *Les Yeux sans Visage.*)

But there are other ways in which Feuillade's influence was felt. One doesn't know, of course, and there is no way of finding out, whether Fritz Lang ever saw any of Feuillade's films. But his serial film *The Spiders* (1922) looks to me very much as if he had seen and admired Feuillade. And from *The Spiders* there is an apocalyptic thread which leads through the *Dr. Mabuse* films straight to Alfred Hitchcock. This cannot of course be proved. It is entirely possible that Lang had been influenced by other, similar films. For Feuillade was not the *creator* of the serial, nor its only exponent. The first serial is generally considered to have been Victorin Jasset's *Nick Carter,* which came out in 1908 and was followed by *The New Exploits of Nick Carter* and a whole series of films about Zigomar. In 1913 there was *Protéa:* the antecedent of Irma Vep, Protéa was a hotel thief dressed in black tights.

The first American serial was *The Adventures of a Girl Spy,* which ran from 1910 to 1913. But this and its successors were all eclipsed by Pearl White and her French director, Louis Gasnier, who were responsible for *The Exploits of Elaine* and *The Perils of Pauline.* And we should remember that it was precisely the forthcoming release of *Les Mystères de New York* (the French title of *The Exploits of Elaine*) that urged Feuillade on to finish the first episode of *Les Vampires.* (Confusingly enough, the French title of *The Perils of Pauline* was *Les Exploits d'Elaine!*) And successful as was *Les Vampires,* it never became a universal craze like the Pearl White films. Their episodes were shorter, they came out regularly, and most important, they were backed up by newspaper serialization.

The serial as a form continued long after the death of Feuillade, only coming to an official end in the late '40s. The most accomplished American practitioner was William Witney, and his *G-Men verus Black Dragon,* grotesque though it is, might have amused Feuillade as it does us. The serial was killed by the end of regular weekly cinema attendance—as well as by a greater degree of sophistication on the part of audiences.

But the line continues on to the films of Jacques Rivette, particularly *Out One: Spectre* where the shots of the Place d'Italie surely must have been inspired by visions of Feuillade—and we know Rivette has seen his work. And some of the Montmartre locations in *Céline and Julie Go Boating* are reminiscent of Feuillade's use of Montmartre in *Les Vampires.*

We might indeed have had a great television serial if Rivette's original idea for *Out One* had ever been carried out: this film was designed as a series of thriteen one-hour films—which takes us straight back to Feuillade. But the past, as Resnais noted, can never be recaptured directly, and those who have seen the thirteen-hour version of *Out One: Spectre,* in which Rivette took his Feuilladesque notion of a thirteen-episode film and transformed it into something else. It is said that "no voice is wholly lost," and Feuillade the commercial craftsman, Feuillade the fabricator of films, still lives. "Please believe me," wrote Feuillade, "when I tell you that it's not the experimenters who will finally obtain for film its rightful recognition, but rather the makers of melodrama—and I count myself among the most devoted of their number . . . I believe I come closer to the truth than they do."

Notes

1. Francis Lacassin, *Louis Feuillade* (Paris: Seghers, 1964), p. 83.
2. *Etudes Cinématographiques* (Paris) 38-39 (Spring 1965), "Surréalisme et Cinéma" issue, p. 20.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
5. Lacassin, *op. cit.*, p. 165.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
7. T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays, 1917-1932* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950), pp. 409, 415.
8. Annette Michelson, "Breton's Surrealism: The *Péripéties* of a Metaphor," *Artforum* (Los Angeles) 5, 1 (Sept. 1966), p. 75.
9. Maurice Bardèche and Robert Brasillach, *Histoire du Cinéma* (Paris: Denoël et Steele), 1935, p. 143.
10. Lacassin, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
11. Alain Resnais, "The Serpents and the Caduceus"; see p. 38.

Movies and Methods
vol. 2
Ed. Bill Nichols
Berkeley + Los Angeles:
Univ. of California Press,
1985.

VISUAL PLEASURE AND NARRATIVE CINEMA

LAURA MULVEY

As working methodologies, psychoanalysis and semiotics can be used to different ends. Both have attracted the attention of feminists as ways of helping to understand how women are represented in the cinema. They have helped feminist critics to extend critiques stressing the limited, stereotypical roles assigned to most female characters to a broad examination of how the formal organization of a film is a function of ideology as well as of aesthetics. One particularly significant aspect of this examination has been inquiry into the ways in which formal organization—the textual system—promotes certain states of mind among viewers. This line of reasoning has received extended treatment in the writings of Laura Mulvey, as well as by Claire Johnston, Pam Cook, and many other writers whose works are in included Further Readings.

In this seminal article, which was written in 1975, Mulvey gives a sharply feminist twist to psychoanalytic theory. Taking Freud's account of sexuality and the unconscious as a basically accurate description of the place of women in a phallocentric order, Mulvey asks how the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form. Many would disagree with this premise as an unnecessary endorsement of Freud's essentialism and as an undervaluation of the social experience of mothering as a major determinant of both gender roles and the psychic internalizations that support them. See, for example, Nancy Chodorow's The Reproduction of Mothering *(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), which cites a wealth of psychoanalytic and sociological literature to support the contrary position. The most direct critique is Julia Lesage's "The Human Subject—You, He, or Me? Or, The Case of the Missing Penis" (originally published in* Jump Cut, *no. 4 [1974]: 26–27), which engendered an extended debate. Written prior to publication of Mulvey's article and directed expressly at points made in* Screen *15, no. 2 (Summer 1974), an issue devoted to Brecht, Lesage's article reminds us that Freud's and Lacan's conception that the body of the woman is a threat to men because it signifies lack or castration is not the only reading of woman's body available, even in psychoanalytic literature. Her critique seemed to go unheard until recently. D. N. Rodowick's "The Difficulty of Difference" (*Wide Angle *5, no. 1 [1982]: 4–15) broaches the topic of masochism, which Mulvey's essay suppresses, but it fails to make a radical break with Mulvey's assumptions. In Part 5, Gaylyn Studlar's article, "Masochism and the Perverse Pleasures of the Cinema," carries this critique further by arguing that visual pleasure derives primarily from masochistic sources. Thus, she overturns the basic premises of Mulvey's article and of others who have followed her lead. Studlar's article and the section of* Jump Cut, *no. 29 (1984) on women and representation (see in particular Jane Gaines's introduction) indicate that,*

after a period of remarkably strong influence, Mulvey's perspective is being displaced or contextualized by alternatives that are only now being heard.

Mulvey's view of patriarchy and film form is seductively direct. Assuming that male visual pleasure is the controlling pleasure in cinema, she describes its two central forms: scopophilic pleasure that is linked to sexual attraction (voyeurism in extremis) and scopophilic pleasure that is linked to narcissistic identification (the introjection of ideal egos). Within the assumptions of the heterosexual orientation, which Mulvey does not contest, narcissistic identification works to strengthen the ego through same-sex identification (between boys and male stars, for example), while sexual attraction is of a different order, since it can weaken the ego in the interests of instinctual gratification. Mulvey then considers the consequences of the erotic attraction of male viewers for female characters, arguing that the attraction is ambivalent, since the feminine is seen not only as a lure but as a threat: the threat of sinking into the "half-light of the imaginary," the threat of castration conveyed by the "real absence of a penis" from the body of the woman. The reality of that absence has often been called into question by those who point out that absence is itself a conceptual and symbolic category. The existence of female genitalia must be denied in order to see the "lack" that Freud and our phallocentric culture proclaim. See the "Critique of Phallocentrism" in Anthony Wilden's System and Structure *2nd ed. (London: Tavistock, 1980, 278–301).*

For Mulvey, male ambivalence toward the image of woman propels the film text and the viewer toward nonmutually exclusive extremes: either to devalue, punish, or save woman, the guilty object, as Hitchcock's films do, or to make her a pedestal figure, a fetish, as von Sternberg and sometimes Hitchcock films do. These extremes leave no place for the female viewer. (In a later article, Mulvey describes how the female viewer must accept identification with a female heroine on the impossible terms of an aggressive, preoedipal sexuality or a passive, postoedipal one.) The possibilities for female sexual attraction (voyeuristic instead of narcissistic scopophilia) remain to be explored in comparable detail. See Mulvey's "Afterthoughts . . . Inspired by Duel in the Sun*" in* Framework, *nos. 15–17 (Summer 1981): 12–15.*

The alternative that Mulvey proposes is the refusal of visual pleasure as structured by a patriarchal order. Mulvey's own filmmaking work may be seen as an indication of the directions that such a refusal might take, while Claire Johnston's references in the next article to Chantal Akerman's work suggest another. (Mulvey's films include Penthesilea *[1974],* Riddles of the Sphinx *[1977], and* Crystal Gazing *[1982], all with Peter Wollen.) Of paramount importance to the development of a specifically feminist criticism is Mulvey's persuasive demonstration of the inadequacy of criticism that assigns formal or thematic meanings to works that can be described or explained objectively. She argues that scopophilic drives "pursue aims in indifference to perceptual reality, creating the imagised, eroticised concept of the world that forms the perception of the subject and makes a mockery of empirical objectivity." Such insight must be the starting-point for any affect-oriented feminist aesthetic.*

I. INTRODUCTION

A. A Political Use of Psychoanalysis

This paper intends to use psychoanalysis to discover where and how the fascination of film is reinforced by pre-existing patterns of fascination already at work within the individual subject and the social formations that have moulded him. It takes as starting point the way film reflects, reveals and even plays on the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference which controls images, erotic ways of looking and spectacle. It is helpful to understand what the cinema has been, how its magic has worked in the past, while attempting a theory and a practice which will challenge this cinema of the past. Psychoanalytic theory is thus appropriated here as a political weapon, demonstrating the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form.

The paradox of phallocentrism in all its manifestations is that it depends on the image of the castrated woman to give order and meaning to its world. An idea of woman stands as lynch pin to the system: it is her lack that produces the phallus as a symbolic presence, it is her desire to make good the lack that the phallus signifies. Recent writing in *Screen* about psychoanalysis and the cinema has not sufficiently brought out the importance of the representation of the female form in a symbolic order in which, in the last resort, it speaks castration and nothing else. To summarise briefly: the function of woman in forming the patriarchal unconscious is twofold, she first symbolises the castration threat by her real absence of a penis and second thereby raises her child into the symbolic. Once this has been achieved, her meaning in the process is at an end, it does not last into the world of law and language except as a memory, which oscillates between memory of maternal plenitude and memory of lack. Both are posited on nature (or on anatomy in Freud's famous phrase). Woman's desire is subjected to her image as bearer of the bleeding wound, she can exist only in relation to castration and cannot transcend it. She turns her child into the signifier of her own desire to possess a penis (the condition, she imagines, of entry into the symbolic). Either she must gracefully give way to the word, the Name of the Father and the Law, or else struggle to keep her child down with her in the half-light of the imaginary. Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning.

There is an obvious interest in this analysis for feminists, a beauty in its exact rendering of the frustration experienced under the phallocentric order. It gets us nearer to the roots of our oppression, it brings an articulation of the problem closer, it faces us with the ultimate challenge: how to fight the unconscious structured like a language (formed critically at the moment of arrival of language) while still caught within the language of the patriarchy. There is no way in which we can produce an alternative out of the blue, but we can begin to make a break by examining patriarchy with the tools it provides, of which psychoanalysis is not the

only but an important one. We are still separated by a great gap from important issues for the female unconscious which are scarcely relevant to phallocentric theory: the sexing of the female infant and her relationship to the symbolic, the sexually mature woman as non-mother, maternity outside the signification of the phallus, the vagina. But, at this point, psychoanalytic theory as it now stands can at least advance our understanding of the status quo, of the patriarchal order in which we are caught.

B. Destruction of Pleasure as a Radical Weapon

As an advanced representation system, the cinema poses questions of the ways the unconscious (formed by the dominant order) structures ways of seeing and pleasure in looking. Cinema has changed over the last few decades. It is no longer the monolithic system based on large capital investment exemplified at its best by Hollywood in the 1930's, 1940's and 1950's. Technological advances (16mm, etc.) have changed the economic conditions of cinematic production, which can now be artisanal as well as capitalist. Thus it has been possible for an alternative cinema to develop. However self-conscious and ironic Hollywood managed to be, it always restricted itself to a formal mise-en-scène reflecting the dominant ideological concept of the cinema. The alternative cinema provides a space for a cinema to be born which is radical in both a political and an aesthetic sense and challenges the basic assumptions of the mainstream film. This is not to reject the latter moralistically, but to highlight the ways in which its formal preoccupations reflect the psychical obsessions of the society which produced it, and, further, to stress that the alternative cinema must start specifically by reacting against these obsessions and assumptions. A politically and aesthetically avant-garde cinema is now possible, but it can still only exist as a counterpoint.

The magic of the Hollywood style at its best (and of all the cinema which fell within its sphere of influence) arose, not exclusively, but in one important aspect, from its skilled and satisfying manipulation of visual pleasure. Unchallenged, mainstream film coded the erotic into the language of the dominant patriarchal order. In the highly developed Hollywood cinema it was only through these codes that the alienated subject, torn in his imaginary memory by a sense of loss, by the terror of potential lack in phantasy, came near to finding a glimpse of satisfaction: through its formal beauty and its play on his own formative obsessions. This article will discuss the interweaving of that erotic pleasure in film, its meaning, and in particular the central place of the image of woman. It is said that analysing pleasure, or beauty, destroys it. That is the intention of this article. The satisfaction and reinforcement of the ego that represent the high point of film history hitherto must be attacked. Not in favour of a reconstructed new pleasure, which cannot exist in the abstract, nor of intellectualised unpleasure, but to make way for a total negation of the ease and plenitude of the narrative fiction film. The alternative is the thrill that comes from leaving the past behind without rejecting it, transcending outworn or oppressive forms, or daring to break with normal pleasurable expectations in order to conceive a new language of desire.

II. PLEASURE IN LOOKING/FASCINATION WITH THE HUMAN FORM

A. The cinema offers a number of possible pleasures. One is scopophilia. There are circumstances in which looking itself is a source of pleasure, just as, in the reverse formation, there is pleasure in being looked at. Originally, in his *Three Essays on Sexuality,* Freud isolated scopophilia as one of the component instincts of sexuality which exist as drives quite independently of the erotogenic zones. At this point he associated scopophilia with taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze. His particular examples centre around the voyeuristic activities of children, their desire to see and make sure of the private and the forbidden (curiosity about other people's genital and bodily functions, about the presence or absence of the penis and, retrospectively, about the primal scene). In this analysis scopophilia is essentially active. (Later, in *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes,* Freud developed his theory of scopophilia further, attaching it initially to pre-genital autoeroticism, after which the pleasure of the look is transferred to others by analogy. There is a close working here of the relationship between the active instinct and its further development in a narcissistic form.) Although the instinct is modified by other factors, in particular the constitution of the ego, it continues to exist as the erotic basis for pleasure in looking at another person as object. At the extreme, it can become fixated into a perversion, producing obsessive voyeurs and Peeping Toms whose only sexual satisfaction can come from watching, in an active controlling sense, an objectified other.

At first glance, the cinema would seem to be remote from the undercover world of the surreptitious observation of an unknowing and unwilling victim. What is seen on the screen is so manifestly shown. But the mass of mainstream film, and the conventions within which it has consciously evolved, portray a hermetically sealed world which unwinds magically, indifferent to the presence of the audience, producing for them a sense of separation and playing on their voyeuristic phantasy. Moreover, the extreme contrast between the darkness in the auditorium (which also isolates the spectators from one another) and the brilliance of the shifting patterns of light and shade on the screen helps to promote the illusion of voyeuristic separation. Although the film is really being shown, is there to be seen, conditions of screening and narrative conventions give the spectator an illusion of looking in on a private world. Among other things, the position of the spectators in the cinema is blatantly one of repression of their exhibitionism and projection of the repressed desire onto the performer.

B. The cinema satisfies a primordial wish for pleasurable looking, but it also goes further, developing scopophilia in its narcissistic aspect. The conventions of mainstream film focus attention on the human form. Scale, space, stories are all anthropomorphic. Here, curiosity and the wish to look intermingle with a fascination with likeness and recognition: the human face, the human body, the relationship between the human form and its surroundings, the visible presence of the person in the world. Jacques Lacan has described how the moment when a child recognises its own image in the mirror is crucial for the constitution of the ego. Several aspects of this analysis are relevant here. The mirror phase occurs at a

time when the child's physical ambitions outstrip his motor capacity, with the result that his recognition of himself is joyous in that he imagines his mirror image to be more complete, more perfect than he experiences his own body. Recognition is thus overlaid with misrecognition: the image recognised is conceived as the reflected body of the self, but its misrecognition as superior projects this body outside itself as an ideal ego, the alienated subject, which, re-introjected as an ego ideal, gives rise to the future generation of identification with others. This mirror moment predates language for the child.

Important for this article is the fact that it is an image that constitutes the matrix of the imaginary, of recognition/misrecognition and identification, and hence of the first articulation of the I, of subjectivity. This is a moment when an older fascination with looking (at the mother's face, for an obvious example) collides with the initial inklings of self-awareness. Hence it is the birth of the long love affair/despair between image and self-image which has found such intensity of expression in film and such joyous recognition in the cinema audience. Quite apart from the extraneous similarities between screen and mirror (the framing of the human form in its surroundings, for instance), the cinema has structures of fascination strong enough to allow temporary loss of ego while simultaneously reinforcing the ego. The sense of forgetting the world as the ego has subsequently come to perceive it (I forgot who I am and where I was) is nostalgically reminiscent of that pre-subjective moment of image recognition. At the same time the cinema has distinguished itself in the production of ego ideals as expressed in particular in the star system, the stars centring both screen presence and screen story as they act out a complex process of likeness and difference (the glamorous impersonates the ordinary).

C. Sections II. A and B have set out two contradictory aspects of the pleasurable structures of looking in the conventional cinematic situation. The first, scopophilic, arises from pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight. The second, developed through narcissism and the constitution of the ego, comes from identification with the image seen. Thus, in film terms, one implies a separation of the erotic identity of the subject from the object on the screen (active scopophilia), the other demands identification of the ego with the object on the screen through the spectator's fascination with and recognition of his like. The first is a function of the sexual instincts, the second of ego libido. This dichotomy was crucial for Freud. Although he saw the two as interacting and overlaying each other, the tension between instinctual drives and self-preservation continues to be a dramatic polarisation in terms of pleasure. Both are formative structures, mechanisms not meaning. In themselves they have no signification, they have to be attached to an idealisation. Both pursue aims in indifference to perceptual reality, creating the imagised, eroticised concept of the world that forms the perception of the subject and makes a mockery of empirical objectivity.

During its history, the cinema seems to have evolved a particular illusion of reality in which this contradiction between libido and ego has found a beautifully complementary phantasy world. In *reality* the phantasy world of the screen is subject to the law which produces it. Sexual instincts and identification processes

have a meaning within the symbolic order which articulates desire. Desire, born with language, allows the possibility of transcending the instinctual and the imaginary, but its point of reference continually returns to the traumatic moment of its birth: the castration complex. Hence the look, pleasurable in form, can be threatening in content, and it is woman as representation/image that crystallises this paradox.

III. WOMAN AS IMAGE, MAN AS BEARER OF THE LOOK

A. In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. Woman displayed as sexual object is the leitmotif of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to stripe-tease, from Ziegfeld to Busby Berkeley, she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire. Mainstream film neatly combined spectacle and narrative. (Note, however, how in the musical song-and-dance numbers break the flow of the diegesis.) The presence of woman is an indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation. This alien presence then has to be integrated into cohesion with the narrative. As Budd Boetticher has put it:

> What counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents. She is the one, or rather the love or fear she inspires in the hero, or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act the way he does. In herself the woman has not the slightest importance.

(A recent tendency in narrative film has been to dispense with this problem altogether; hence the development of what Molly Haskell has called the 'buddy movie', in which the active homosexual eroticism of the central male figures can carry the story without distraction.) Traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium, with a shifting tension between the looks on either side of the screen. For instance, the device of the show-girl allows the two looks to be unified technically without any apparent break in the diegesis. A woman performs within the narrative, the gaze of the spectator and that of the male characters in the film are neatly combined without breaking narrative verisimilitude. For a moment the sexual impact of the performing woman takes the film into a no-man's-land outside its own time and space. Thus Marilyn Monroe's first appearance in *The River of No Return* and Lauren Bacall's songs in *To Have and Have Not*. Similarly, conventional close-ups of legs (Dietrich, for instance) or a face (Garbo) integrate into the narrative a different mode of eroticism. One part of a fragmented body destroys the Renaissance space, the illusion of depth demanded by the narrative, it gives flatness, the quality of a cut-out or icon rather than verisimilitude to the screen.

B. An active/passive heterosexual division of labour has similarly controlled narrative structure. According to the principles of the ruling ideology and the psychical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification. Man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like. Hence the split between spectacle and narrative supports the man's role as the active one of forwarding the story, making things happen. The man controls the film phantasy and also emerges as the representative of power in a further sense: as the bearer of the look of the spectator, transferring it behind the screen to neutralise the extra-diegetic tendencies represented by woman as spectacle. This is made possible through the processes set in motion by structuring the film around a main controlling figure with whom the spectator can identify. As the spectator identifies with the main male[1] protagonist, he projects his look onto that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the male protagonist as he controls events coincides with the active power of the erotic look, both giving a satisfying sense of omnipotence. A male movie star's glamorous characteristics are thus not those of the erotic object of the gaze, but those of the more perfect, more complete, more powerful ideal ego conceived in the original moment of recognition in front of the mirror. The character in the story can make things happen and control events better than the subject/spectator, just as the image in the mirror was more in control of motor coordination. In contrast to woman as icon, the active male figure (the ego ideal of the identification process) demands a three-dimensional space corresponding to that of the mirror recognition, in which the alienated subject internalised his own representation of this imaginary existence. He is a figure in a landscape. Here the function of film is to reproduce as accurately as possible the so-called natural conditions of human perception. Camera technology (as exemplified by deep focus in particular) and camera movements (determined by the action of the protagonist), combined with invisible editing (demanded by realism), all tend to blur the limits of screen space. The male protagonist is free to command the stage, a stage of spatial illusion in which he articulates the look and creates the action.

C.1 Sections III. A and B have set out a tension between a mode of representation of woman in film and conventions surrounding the diegesis. Each is associated with a look: that of the spectator in direct scopophilic contact with the female form displayed for his enjoyment (connoting male phantasy) and that of the spectator fascinated with the image of his like set in an illusion of natural space, and through him gaining control and possession of the woman within the diegesis. (This tension and the shift from one pole to the other can structure a single text. Thus both in *Only Angels Have Wings* and in *To Have and Have Not*, the film opens with the woman as object of the combined gaze of spectator and all the male protagonists in the film. She is isolated, glamorous, on display, sexualised. But as the narrative progresses she falls in love with the main male protagonist and becomes his property, losing her outward glamorous characteristics, her generalised sexuality, her show-girl connotations; her eroticism is subjected to the male star alone. By means of identification with him, through participation in his power, the spectator can indirectly possess her too.)

But in psychoanalytic terms, the female figure poses a deeper problem. She also connotes something that the look continually circles around but disavows: her lack of a penis, implying a threat of castration and hence unpleasure. Ultimately, the meaning of woman is sexual difference, the absence of the penis as visually ascertainable, the material evidence on which is based the castration complex essential for the organisation of entrance to the symbolic order and the law of the father. Thus the woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the look, always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified. The male unconscious has two avenues of escape from this castration anxiety: preoccupation with the re-enactment of the original trauma (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery), counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment or saving of the guilty object (an avenue typified by the concerns of the *film noir*); or else complete disavowal of castration by the substitution of a fetish object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous (hence over-valuation, the cult of the female star). This second avenue, fetishistic scopophilia, builds up the physical beauty of the object, transforming it into something satisfying in itself. The first avenue, voyeurism, on the contrary, has associations with sadism: pleasure lies in ascertaining guilt (immediately associated with castration), asserting control and subjecting the guilty person through punishment or forgiveness. This sadistic side fits in well with narrative. Sadism demands a story, depends on making something happen, forcing a change in another person, a battle of will and strength, victory/defeat, all occuring in a linear time with a beginning and an end. Fetishistic scopophilia, on the other hand, can exist outside linear time as the erotic instinct is focussed on the look alone. These contradictions and ambiguities can be illustrated more simply by using works by Hitchcock and Sternberg, both of whom take the look almost as the content or subject matter of many of their films. Hitchcock is the more complex, as he uses both mechanisms. Sternberg's work, on the other hand, provides many pure examples of fetishistic scopophilia.

C.2 It is well known that Sternberg once said he would welcome his films being projected upside down so that story and character involvement would not interfere with the spectator's undiluted appreciation of the screen image. This statement is revealing but ingenuous. Ingenuous in that his films do demand that the figure of the woman (Dietrich, in the cycle of films with her, as the ultimate example) should be identifiable. But revealing in that it emphasises the fact that for him the pictorial space enclosed by the frame is paramount rather than narrative or identification processes. While Hitchcock goes into the investigative side of voyeurism, Sternberg produces the ultimate fetish, taking it to the point where the powerful look of the male protagonist (characteristic of traditional narrative film) is broken in favour of the image in direct erotic rapport with the spectator. The beauty of the woman as object and the screen space coalesce; she is no longer the bearer of guilt but a perfect product, whose body, stylised and fragmented by close-ups, is the content of the film and the direct recipient of the spectator's look. Sternberg plays down the illusion of screen depth; his screen tends to be one-dimensional, as light and shade, lace, steam, foliage, net, streamers, etc,

reduce the visual field. There is little or no mediation of the look through the eyes of the main male protagonist. On the contrary, shadowy presences like La Bessière in *Morocco* act as surrogates for the director, detached as they are from audience identification. Despite Sternberg's insistence that his stories are irrelevant, it is significant that they are concerned with situation, not suspense, and cyclical rather than linear time, while plot complications revolve around misunderstanding rather than conflict. The most important absence is that of the controlling male gaze within the screen scene. The high point of emotional drama in the most typical Dietrich films, her supreme moments of erotic meaning, take place in the absence of the man she loves in the fiction. There are other witnesses, other spectators watching her on the screen, their gaze is one with, not standing in for, that of the audience. At the end of *Morocco,* Tom Brown has already disappeared into the desert when Amy Jolly kicks off her gold sandals and walks after him. At the end of *Dishonoured,* Kranau is indifferent to the fate of Magda. In both cases, the erotic impact, sanctified by death, is displayed as a spectacle for the audience. The male hero misunderstands and, above all, does not see.

In Hitchcock, by contrast, the male hero does see precisely what the audience sees. However, in the films I shall discuss here, he takes fascination with an image through scopophilic eroticism as the subject of the film. Moreover, in these cases the hero portrays the contradictions and tensions experienced by the spectator. In *Vertigo* in particular, but also in *Marnie* and *Rear Window,* the look is central to the plot, oscillating between voyeurism and fetishistic fascination. As a twist, a further manipulation of the normal viewing process, which in some sense reveals it, Hitchcock uses the process of identification normally associated with ideological correctness and the recognition of established morality and shows up its perverted side. Hitchcock has never concealed his interest in voyeurism, cinematic and non-cinematic. His heroes are exemplary of the symbolic order and the law—a policeman (*Vertigo*), a dominant male possessing money and power (*Marnie*)—but their erotic drives lead them into compromised situations. The power to subject another person to the will sadistically or to the gaze voyeuristically is turned onto the woman as the object of both. Power is backed by a certainty of legal right and the established guilt of the woman (evoking castration, psychoanalytically speaking). True perversion is barely concealed under a shallow mask of ideological correctness—the man is on the right side of the law, the woman on the wrong. Hitchcock's skilful use of identification processes and liberal use of subjective camera from the point of view of the male protagonist draw the spectators deeply into his position, making them share his uneasy gaze. The audience is absorbed into a voyeuristic situation within the screen scene and diegesis which parodies his own in the cinema. In his analysis of *Rear Window,* Douchet takes the film as a metaphor for the cinema. Jeffries is the audience, the events in the apartment block opposite correspond to the screen. As he watches, an erotic dimension is added to his look, a central image to the drama. His girlfriend Lisa had been of little sexual interest to him, more or less a drag, so long as she remained on the spectator side. When she crosses the barrier between his room and the block opposite, their relationship is re-born erotically. He does not merely watch her through his lens, as a distant meaningful image, he also sees her as a guilty intruder exposed by a dangerous man threatening her with punishment, and thus finally saves her. Lisa's exhibitionism has already been established by her obsessive interest in dress and style, in being a passive image of visual perfection; Jeffries's voyeurism and activity have also been established through his work as a photo-journalist, a maker of stories and captor of images. However, his enforced inactivity, binding him to his seat as a spectator, puts him squarely in the phantasy position of the cinema audience.

In *Vertigo,* subjective camera predominates. Apart from one flash-back from Judy's point of view, the narrative is woven around what Scottie sees or fails to see. The audience follows the growth of his erotic obsession and subsequent despair precisely from his point of view. Scottie's voyeurism is blatant: he falls in love with a woman he follows and spies on without speaking to. Its sadistic side is equally blatant: he has chosen (and freely chosen, for he had been a successful lawyer) to be a policeman, with all the attendant possibilities of pursuit and investigation. As a result, he follows, watches and falls in love with a perfect image of female beauty and mystery. Once he actually confronts her, his erotic drive is to break her down and force her to tell by persistent cross-questioning. Then, in the second part of the film, he re-enacts his obsessive involvement with the image he loved to watch secretly. He reconstructs Judy as Madeleine, forces her to conform in every detail to the actual physical appearance of his fetish. Her exhibitionism, her masochism, make her an ideal passive counterpart to Scottie's active sadistic voyeurism. She knows her part is to perform, and only by playing it through and then replaying it can she keep Scottie's erotic interest. But in the repetition he does break her down and succeeds in exposing her guilt. His curiosity wins through and she is punished. In *Vertigo,* erotic involvement with the look is disorientating: the spectator's fascination is turned against him as the narrative carries him through and entwines him with the processes that he is himself exercising. The Hitchcock hero here is firmly placed within the symbolic order, in narrative terms. He has all the attributes of the partriachal superego. Hence the spectator, lulled into a false sense of security by the apparent legality of his surrogate, sees through his look and finds himself exposed as complicit, caught in the moral ambiguity of looking. Far from being simply an aside on the perversion of the police, *Vertigo* focuses on the implications of the active/looking, passive/looked-at split in terms of sexual difference and the power of the male symbolic encapsulated in the hero. Marnie, too, performs for Mark Rutland's gaze and masquerades as the perfect to-be-looked-at image. He, too, is on the side of the law until, drawn in by obsession with her guilt, her secret, he longs to see her in the act of committing a crime, make her confess and thus save her. So he, too, becomes complicit as he acts out the implications of his power. He controls money and words, he can have his cake and eat it.

IV. SUMMARY

The psychoanalytic background that has been discussed in this article is relevant to the pleasure and unpleasure offered by traditional narrative film. The scopophilic instinct (pleasure in looking at another person as an erotic object),

and, in contradistinction, ego libido (forming identification processes) act as formations, mechanisms, which this cinema has played on. The image of woman as (passive) raw material for the (active) gaze of man takes the argument a step further into the structure of representation, adding a further layer demanded by the ideology of the patriarchal order as it is worked out in its favourite cinematic form—illusionistic narrative film. The argument returns again to the psychoanalytic background in that woman as representation signifies castration, inducing voyeuristic or fetishistic mechanisms to circumvent her threat. None of these interacting layers is intrinsic to film, but it is only in the film form that they can reach a perfect and beautiful contradiction, thanks to the possibility in the cinema of shifting the emphasis of the look. It is the place of the look that defines cinema, the possibility of varying it and exposing it. This is what makes cinema quite different in its voyeuristic potential from, say, strip-tease, theatre, shows, etc. Going far beyond highlighting a woman's to-be-looked-at-ness, cinema builds the way she is to be looked at into the spectacle itself. Playing on the tension between film as controlling the dimension of time (editing, narrative) and film as controlling the dimension of space (changes in distance, editing), cinematic codes create a gaze, a world, and an object, thereby producing an illusion cut to the measure of desire. It is these cinematic codes and their relationship to formative external structures that must be broken down before mainstream film and the pleasure it provides can be challenged.

To begin with (as an ending), the voyeuristic-scopophilic look that is a crucial part of traditional filmic pleasure can itself be broken down. There are three different looks associated with cinema: that of the camera as it records the profilmic event, that of the audience as it watches the final product, and that of the characters at each other within the screen illusion. The conventions of narrative film deny the first two and subordinate them to the third, the conscious aim being always to eliminate intrusive camera presence and prevent a distancing awareness in the audience. Without these two absences (the material existence of the recording process, the critical reading of the spectator), fictional drama cannot achieve reality, obviousness and truth. Nevertheless, as this article has argued, the structure of looking in narrative fiction film contains a contradiction in its own premises: the female image as a castration threat constantly endangers the unity of the diegesis and bursts through the world of illusion as an intrusive, static, one-dimensional fetish. Thus the two looks materially present in time and space are obsessively subordinated to the neurotic needs of the male ego. The camera becomes the mechanism for producing an illusion of Renaissance space, flowing movements compatible with the human eye, an ideology of representation that revolves around the perception of the subject; the camera's look is disavowed in order to create a convincing world in which the spectator's surrogate can perform with verisimilitude. Simultaneously, the look of the audience is denied an intrinsic force; as soon as fetishistic representation of the female image threatens to break the spell of illusion, and the erotic image on the screen appears directly (without mediation) to the spectator, the fact of fetishisation, concealing as it does castration fear, freezes the look, fixates the spectator and prevents him from achieving any distance from the image in front of him.

This complex interaction of looks is specific to film. The first blow against the monolithic accumulation of traditional film conventions (already undertaken by radical film-makers) is to free the look of the camera into its materiality in time and space and the look of the audience into dialectics, passionate detachment. There is no doubt that this destroys the satisfaction, pleasure and privilege of the 'invisible guest', and highlights how film has depended on voyeuristic active/passive mechanisms. Women, whose image has continually been stolen and used for this end, cannot view the decline of the traditional film form with anything much more than sentimental regret.

Note

1. There are films with a woman as main protagonist, of course. To analyse this phenomenon seriously here would take me too far afield. Pam Cook and Claire Johnston's study of *The Revolt of Mamie Stover* in Phil Hardy, ed., *Raoul Walsh*, Edinburgh, 1974, shows in a striking case how the strength of this female protagonist is more apparent than real.

TOWARDS A FEMINIST FILM PRACTICE: SOME THESES

CLAIRE JOHNSTON

Claire Johnston's conception of feminist film practice involves a struggle for the means of signification. Our sense of ourselves as conscious, autonomous individuals depends on the effect of material practices that position us in relation to others. Going from Freud's theory of sexual position and identity through the elaborate recastings of this theory by Jacques Lacan, Johnston argues that existing practices identify the feminine as nonmale. Her movement over this difficult terrain of psychoanalytic semiotic theory provides a brief, helpful summary of the implications of psychoanalysis for feminism from a perspective close to Laura Mulvey's, and it is subject to similar criticisms. From this review, she draws the conclusion that feminist film practice must challenge the dominant film practice, whose means of signification are keyed to a patriarchal ideology that reconstitutes sexuality in hierarchical or oppositional terms: "It is this imaginary unit, the sutured coherence [that centers on the phallus as paradigm of male sexuality, marking the female as "object rather than t[he] the imaginary sense of identity set up by the classic film which by a feminist film practice."

Johnston locates one instance of instructive challenge in Ch
Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce—1080 Bruxelles. (*Fo*

from Rediscovering French Film ; New York : The Museum of Modern Art, 1983

Poetic Realism / *Dudley Andrew*

If, with trepidation and numerous qualifications, we dare to characterize the national genius at play in the various cinemas of the world, we might claim that Hollywood has been obsessed with entertainment, that Germany has mastered the psychological mode, and that Russia has given us the greatest strain of social epics. France, we would surely conclude, has been the source of a cinema that is simultaneously lyric and realist.

It is precisely this concern for national tradition that led Jean Grémillon to tie French film realism to a protection of Frenchness in all the arts, from medieval architecture to painting, music, and literature of all eras.[1] Recognizing the calculated imprecision of such an assertion, Grémillon immediately goes on to specify that this strain of French art has shown special attentiveness to the apparently minor and peripheral aspects of physical and social life. Such nearly random observations are, however, raised in French art to a level where they take on a descriptive and symbolic density all the stronger for the humility of their origins. Grémillon's key phrase, taken directly, I believe, from one of André Bazin's formulations about Jean Renoir,[2] insists that French cinema is surpassingly realist and most French when it brings out formerly hidden relations between "objects and beings," between the outer world and the inner.

Whether or not Grémillon is right about this great aesthetic tradition, his essay certainly places him in the great tradition of French realist film theory. It was Louis Delluc who first sought for cinematic art exactly this concentration on the marginal and fleeting moments of the physical world, which, through the transformative power of camerawork, might express unspoken, unknown aspects of psychological life. In reaction to cries for pure cinema and abstract expression, Delluc settled on the term *photogénie*[3] to characterize the quality of the films he heralded.

Grémillon learned his art under the sway of this term and, in his semidocumentaries of the late '20s, provided French impressionism with several of its most sublime examples of the "photogenic." Grémillon's mature films, from *La Petite Lise* (1930) through *Lumière d'Eté* (1943), contributed to "poetic realism," a term that was the direct heir of *photogénie* in its apparent concern for lyricism and realism as well as in its attractive vagueness.

The critics Bazin and Jean Mitry, who have carried the French theoretical tradition up to the '70s, grew up on the particular realism of the lyric tradition. Both men nod to that perpetual French concern with realism indicated by Grémillon, pointing to the pre-World War I films of Victorin Jasset and Louis Feuillade, who transformed the streets of Paris into a web of intrigue and mystery. Mitry personally participated in the impressionist movement and convincingly argues for the importance of the intimate psychological worlds its filmmakers constructed out of carefully chosen landscapes (I think of Delluc's *Femme de Nulle Part* and *Fièvre,* clear precedents for Marcel Carné's work). Both critics feel that it was in the first decade of the sound era that France fully answered its vocation to realism.

Always a tendentious term, realism is subject to fragmentation into a host of related subspecies. In France alone Mitry finds psychological realism, verism, social realism, naturalism, tragic realism, and of course poetic realism.[4] What these have in common is the manner in which they signify not just the authenticity of their images, but the excess of reality beyond them. Particularly with Renoir we are made to feel the inexhaustible extension or surface of material life as well as the nearly infinite webs of interrelation suggested by any slice of it. In his films every shot seems to vibrate with unexplored possibilities and with the sense that something more waits at the edges of the frame. Although the poetic realists radically limited the material surface they chose to film, their realism derived from the nearly metaphysical depths they plumbed in the everyday details that composed their films. These two dimensions, extension and depth, gave to the French film a look of seriousness and authenticity not to be found in any other national cinema of the '30s.

While Renoir's work has certainly proved to be the greatest legacy of this decade, in 1938 no film looked more revolutionary than Carné's *Quai des Brumes.* With its opening scene of bedraggled Jean Gabin struggling down a foggy road, the very temperament of French cinema changed, or so it was thought. One critic compared the impact of this film to that of Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless,* each ushering in a new morality, a new, anonymous hero, and a new style of filmmaking.[5]

***Le Grand Jeu*, 1934, Jacques Feyder (Françoise Rosay and Pierre Richard-Willm)**

But the poetic realism of *Quai des Brumes* did not simply materialize out of the air. It was prepared for over the decade by a turn away from stage plays and toward a more novelistic conception of film narrative. With their penchant for intimate subjects, the French relied in the main on *récits,* brief novels tied to the perceptions or reactions of a single personage, or in any case involving only a handful of characters.

Certainly the most substantial influence on the style of *Quai des Brumes* must be found in Carné's apprenticeship under Jacques Feyder, whose *Le Grand Jeu* (1934) and *Pension Mimosas* (1935) succeeded almost entirely because the decor exercised a visible effect on the characters, bringing them in the end toward certain doom. Mitry would have us go back to Pierre Chenal's *Rue sans Nom* (early 1933) for the true baptism of the movement.[6] Taken from the novel by Marcel Aymé, this film languished in the dark suburban streets of Paris, in the aimlessness of its characters, and in a slow, inexorable dramatic rhythm. Since Aymé had already been characterized in the literary world as a "poetic realist" writer, precisely for novels like *Rue sans Nom,* the *Cinémonde* reviewer declared the film to be at once realist and poetic.[7] Helping to confirm Chenal's position at the forefront of the movement was Aymé's script for the 1935 *Crime and Punishment,* which, except for its length, was an ideal literary source for the growing tendencies of serious French filmmaking.

Chenal was not working alone in constructing stunning decor. The decade began with Grémillon's *La Petite Lise,* reviewed at the time as a film which "created an atmosphere surrounded by destiny, *fatum implacabile.*"[8] In its tone *La Petite Lise* uncannily and uniquely prefigured the films of the decade's end. Yet a heightened attention to decor characterized even the lighter, more exotic films from the early '30s. Fedor Ozep's remarkable *Amok* (1933), set in a dense jungle and chronicling the mad suicidal desires of a deranged doctor, is surely the most exotic of all, followed by Marc Allégret's more substantial *Lac aux Dames* (1934) and Jean Vigo's incredible *L'Atalante* (1934). Vigo may have given us not so much poetic realism as magic realism by lending to the objects stuffed into his film not a fatality but a liberating sense of possibility; in any case his only feature film confirms the movement of the best French cinema away from intrigue and toward atmosphere. Much the same point may be made for the bucolic lyricism of Marcel Pagnol and the tragic naturalism of Renoir: even though neither fits well into the poetic realist camp, their films clearly belong to an era dominated by that school, by its conception of story and character, by its attention to evocative physical detail.

These examples (and many others) suggest that if *Quai des Brumes* stunned the world, it was with the concentration and single-mindedness of its project rather than with the novelty of its means. Because of *Quai des Brumes,* a plethora of films coming just before and after it fall recognizably into place; the poetic-realist school congeals. From the vantage point of this film, one can look back to Carné's *Jenny* (1936) with its misty opening and close and forward to *Hôtel du Nord* (1938) and *Le Jour Se Lève* (1939) with their decor of "the other" Paris and the suicidal doom of their romantic heroes. Julien Duvivier's *La Bandera* (1935) and *Pépé le Moko* (19

dramatize the merciless climate of North Africa, a climate as much moral as meteorological. His *Carnet de Bal* (1937) and *La Fin du Jour* (1939) don't even tempt us with such exotic settings but proceed directly to the same sad end. Allégret's *Gribouille* (1937), Jeff Musso's somber *Le Puritain* (also 1937, from the moody novel by Liam O'Flaherty), and even Christian-Jaque's disarming fantasy *Les Disparus de Saint-Agil* (1938) partake in the unquestionable success brought to the French cinema by its peerless set designers and writers. Nor can one forget to bring back the name Grémillon, who achieved success with his tale of the Legionnaire, *Gueule d'Amour* (1937), and went on to make *L'Etrange Monsieur Victor* (1938), *Remorques* (1940), and *Lumière d'Eté* (1943).

If Grémillon tempts one to let poetic realism bleed over into the '40s, it is largely based on the peculiarities of the scripts of Jacques Prévert, who also wrote the most famous film of the epoch, Carné's *Les Enfants du Paradis*. But the realist heart of the movement was weakened by the Paris and Vichy governments during World War II, when the great films of the '30s were uniformly banned and when demoralizing scripts stood no chance of being produced. Because of the politics of the time, but also because of an apparent exhaustion of inspiration, poetic realism devolved on the one hand into a version of *film noir* (Clouzot, Decoin) and on the other into clever, brittle, allegorical pieces (Carné, Christian-Jaque). Atmosphere in Cocteau's films and in those of Serge de Poligny was overbearing and drippingly romantic. Dialogue in all of Prévert's 1940s scripts became openly precious and outré.

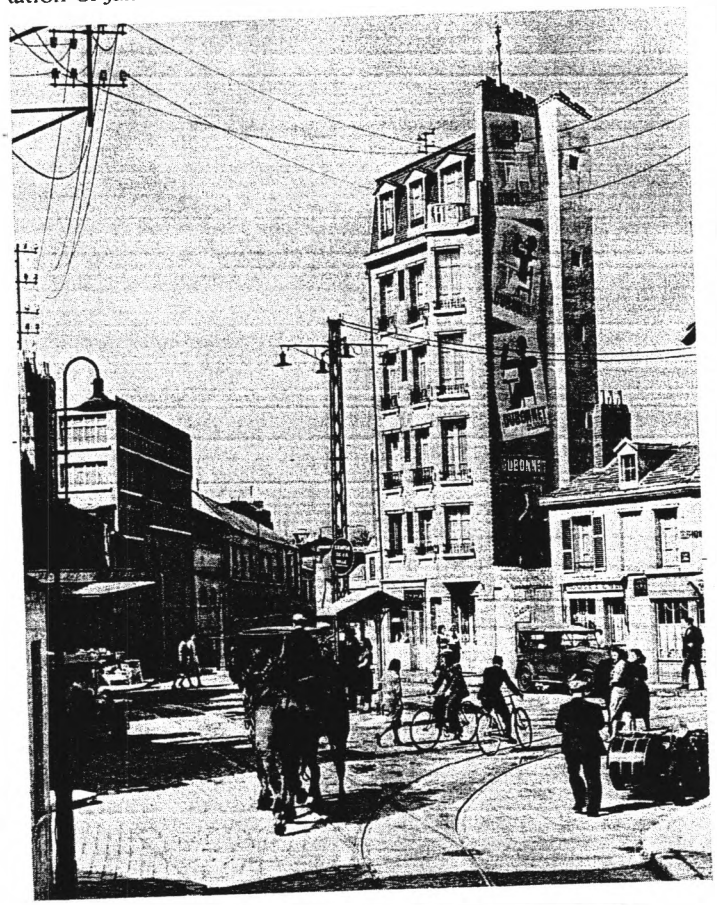
While the French had clearly relinquished the balance that poetic realism had achieved in the '30s, the Italians, who had scrupulously monitored the French cinema in the journals *Cinema* and *Bianco e Nero*, hoped to transplant it. Roberto Rossellini, Vittorio De Sica, and others claimed Carné and Duvivier as their masters.[3] Neorealism declared itself the heir of poetic realism.

The strength the Italians found in the French cinema of the prewar era, a strength they planned to marshal themselves, derived from an extraordinary interdependence of subject and style. Thus, in banning the demoralizing themes of these films, the governments of 1939–44 killed the movement, driving it into calligraphy and banality.

What was so debilitating about the great poetic-realist films? From 1936 on, each invoked a concept of fatality as a governing dramatic motor that implacably ground under its hero, who, especially in the later years of the decade, was working class and severely alienated. It took very little imagination to read in these films the depressing story of fragile ideals fighting the machinery of class politics and modern industrialization. Even though few of these films dwelt at any length on working conditions, the working place represented a suicidal ennui from which the hero strove madly to release himself. Gabin in *Gueule d'Amour* has an almost enviable job as a typesetter in Paris. His fellow workers and his boss are most cordial to him. Yet he is drawn, and he draws us, toward Mireille Balin, the mysterious siren of another class, another world. By the time of *Le Jour Se Lève*, the factory literally suffocates Gabin with sand and noise. Gabin, as has been too often pointed out, is always the pure self, uncorrupted by culture, relying only on the force of his integrity and his singleness of purpose. In a world of compromises he must be doomed, spectacularly doomed.

The obsession of these films with the fatal but pure desires of lower-class or classless heroes (in *Quai des Brumes*, Gabin is, precisely, a deserter) gave the movement its fullest definition and intersected a popular mood in the sorry months before the collapse of the country. This theme, especially as it was organized around the perceptions of a single consciousness, drew tremendous power from the literary traditions which fostered the climate and techniques of poetic realism.

In America we need only mention Hemingway or the hard-boiled novel, remembering that one of the last films of the poetic-realist movement was Chenal's adaptation of James Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*



***Le Jour Se Lève*, 1939, Marcel Carné**

***Gribouille*, 1937, Marc Allégret (Gilbert Gil, Jacqueline Pacaud, and Raimu)**

(Le Dernier Tournant). And indeed the American novel did have an impact on these filmmakers, as C.E. Magny pointed out long ago;[10] but an even more important and less often cited source was the indigenous French novel.

As noted above, Mitry makes the case[11] that Marcel Aymé is the pivotal figure in the transition from novel to film, being already termed a poetic-realist author who then worked for a cinema of the same designation. As important as Aymé may have been to the actual christening of the film movement, his contribution was limited by the shift in his literary style toward satire. The more vigorous and perpetual source would seem to be Pierre MacOrlan, author of both *Quai des Brumes* and *La Bandera.* In style and reputation the counterpart of Liam O'Flaherty, MacOrlan relishes the outdated romanticism he refuses to escape. Citing as his literary progenitors Villon, Nerval, Dostoyevsky, and Conrad, from 1914 onward he annually turned out novels that are totally dominated by atmosphere. Whether exotic (as in *La Bandera*) or urban *(Quai des Brumes),* his settings ooze a metaphysical angst that wears down the adventurer who confronts this world with an "inflation of sentiment"—as the title of his book of poems would have it.

MacOrlan's term for the literature he and others were producing between the wars was *fantastique social,* fantastic in the sense of Nerval, where visions and longings shimmer to life in the experience of the most sensitive of characters, and social in the sense that these visions are set not in some extraterrestrial or allegorical milieu but in the heart of contemporary life. An early critic of photography (and particularly of the street photography of Eugène Atget and André Kertész), MacOrlan was seized by the alienating effect of mechanically reproduced images. They expressed for him the dominant emotion of the age, that of inquietude. "Each knows how to read between the lines. Each knows how to discover the reflection of his own inquietude behind a curtain of trees, before a crossroads, at the corner of a street, behind a door partly closed. There are moments when the world stops to breathe, to listen. The *fantastique social* is only one interpretation—more or less ingenious—of this complicated image"; and again: "The novel, in its more poetic mode, becomes then the best conductor of this 'inquietude' and of this mistrust which inspires us and which gives to landscapes and to men a signification full of ruses and complications."[12]

One can hardly wonder that Carné preferred MacOrlan's term *fantastique social* to "poetic realism."[13] In striving to turn everyday objects and landscapes into sites of longing, rapture, and metaphysical torment, MacOrlan played perfectly into the hands of the cinema. And he knew it, writing frequently of this rival art as something that had changed forever our relationship with the world. It is exactly such transformations of the everyday into the mysterious that had always captivated Jacques Prévert. Lover of populist literature, romance, and the lyrics of street songs, Prévert became, with *Quai des Brumes,* a reincarnation of MacOrlan, who also wrote lyrics and, cloistered on a distant farm, gave himself up to romantic fantasies.

The fantasies of poetic-realist films involve a constellation of familiar, nearly mythological characters (the virgin; the pathetic, malicious bourgeois; the compromised, good woman; and of course the quiet, authentic, and beleaguered hero). These characters are driven by forces that are explicitly tied to the workings of fate. Now fate is a much smaller concept than destiny, and it is instructive to note the French preference for this intimate, though no less lethal, force as opposed to the national or racial notion of destiny, so dear to the Germans (Fritz Lang especially) and to a naturalism of an earlier era.

In narrating this dark world of stories, poetic realism finds itself linked to one of the strongest traditions of film history, that of romantic and moody pessimism. Mitry without qualms can compare the poetic realists to such directors as Josef von Sternberg, F.W. Murnau, and above all Frank Borzage. These filmmakers and the creators of German Kammerspiel knew how to turn every channel of the medium (acting, decor, editing, camera work) to a single, expressive end. But unlike the Germans, for whom deranged inner states or impulses served as pretexts for imagistic conjurings, and unlike Americans, for whom melodrama and plot resolution became ends in themselves, the French poetic realists remained firmly within the world of the everyday, even as they let the atmosphere of the everyday become the final dramatic point. In modulating through strong tones a limited cluster of themes, motifs, and concerns, French poetic realism arrived at an aesthetic balance which, if it did not represent the kind of eternally valid option Mitry claims for it, at least succeeded in dominating serious film production for a number of years. This balance

already hinted at in our references to *photogénie,* insists on a relation between character and decor that is so strong it radically reduces the function of plot.

Unlike the standard French comedies and historical reconstructions (numerically dominant in the '30s) where actors remained actors, playing to the audience on a set, and unlike the standard American drama where characters inhabit a setting in "make-believe," poetic-realist films approximated that state of narrative art, theorized by Roland Barthes, in which we sense something beyond actor and character, something beyond both set and setting; in these films we are present to the evocation of a *figure* in a *milieu.*[14] When in case after case decor participates in the creation of psychology to such a degree that the entire film seems to radiate from a single imaginative intuition, it is no longer accurate to speak of reading these essential dramas as allegories of the soul or of society. Instead the essential comes to describe a figure who gives encouragement to our imagination under the mood of an insistent key, like a symphonic tone poem whose slight story enables us better to imagine the stakes of an emotional game played among the instruments.

If any narrative cinema competing in the world market can be said to make a difference to film art, then poetic realism did indeed alter our conception of decor. The passion for the essential did not lead designers toward expressionist stylization, at least not directly. Every element of the sets of these films challenges us with its verisimilitude. Nothing by itself seems forced or out of place. And yet all inessential props and lines have been systematically removed until the decor assumes the role of a "figure" representing a key emotional complex (longing, anxiety, etc.). This complex is rendered simultaneously and integrally by the music (at least in the films scored by Maurice Jaubert) and by the limpid poetry of dialogue (especially Prévert's), creating an ambience, an imaginative whole, a self-enclosed artifact. If such films return us to the real it is through the authenticity of the emotions they represent and cue, an authenticity tested against the decisive historical moment out of which they arose as daydreams.

Poetic realism survives in history as a peculiarly cinematic movement because the meanings emanating from

***Quai des Brumes,* 1938, Marcel Carné (Michèle Morgan)**

these films depend so utterly on a play of signifiers seeking their own cohesion. Whereas social realism, verism, naturalism, and even much psychological realism (to rehearse once more Mitry's discriminations) employ cinematic signifiers to render states of affairs already determined in the world, nothing in poetic-realist films is determined, save the atmosphere. Doubtless such a cinema is open to logical imprecision, sentimentality, and the temptation to pure stylization; nevertheless, for much of a decade these films successfully fought such dangers and gave to the world not only the most evocative and serious film art of the time, but a representation of that time more telling than that produced by other, more elite arts.

Notes

1. Jean Grémillon, "French Realism"; see page 113.
2. André Bazin, *Jean Renoir* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), p. 90.
3. Louis Delluc, *Photogénie* (Paris: Grasset, 1920).
4. Jean Mitry, *Histoire du Cinéma,* vol. 4 (Paris: J.-P. Delarge, 1980), pp. 247–351.
5. Robert Chazal, *Marcel Carné* (Paris: Seghers, 1965).
6. Mitry, *op. cit.,* p. 325.
7. Marcel Govel, in *Cinémonde,* Oct. 1933; cited by Mitry, *ibid.,* p. 326.
8. M. Bax, in *Volonté,* Dec. 12, 1930.
9. R. Rossellini, in *L'Ecran Français,* Nov. 12, 1948; see also Roy Armes, *Patterns of Realism* (London: Tantivy Press, 1971), p. 50.
10. Claude-Edmonde Magny, *The Age of the American Novel,* trans. by E. Hochman (New York: Ungar, 1972).
11. Mitry, *op. cit.,* p. 291.
12. Pierre MacOrlan, Preface to 1939 edition of "Le Fantastique Social," in *Masques sur Mesure* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), pp. 13, 15.
13. Edward B. Turk, conclusion to chap. 3 of his forthcoming *Marcel Carné* (Boston: G.K. Hall).
14. I am indebted to Philip Beck for this formulation.

on the passions born of civil war: the majority of films, whatever reservations they may have expressed, celebrated an ecumenical and benevolent version of Gaullism. Over the next few years the cinema reflected the dearth of events likely to bring up memories of the past and celebrated the Gaullist myth of the Resistance; the first signs of a trivialization of the subject can also be seen.

May '68 did little to change this state of affairs, although it had a kind of delayed action in the work of Ophuls. Earlier in this book I counted Ophuls among the factors contributing to the upheavals of the 1970s, but as a strictly cinematic phenomenon his work should be viewed as a product of the 1960s. For the first time, some filmmakers broke with the conformism of their peers to anticipate, and even to help bring about, a change in people's attitudes. But only a few films may be credited with such prescience. Thereafter it became fashionable to take a critical view of the past, and many people followed the lead of the pioneers, so that by the 1970s film was playing a fundamental role in stirring up old memories.

In sum, film in the 1980s evolved in two directions. In the first place, the Occupation shed its sulfurous aura. Most films dealing with the period reflected the popular view. The last taboos evaporated, and the wartime years ceased to be a subject of scandal. It became easier for filmmakers to produce individual statements about the period without fear that wartime memories would overwhelm artistic intent. Second, film no longer played the role of harbinger of the future. The obsessions of the 1980s were first expressed elsewhere, primarily in the courts, and only later transferred to the screen. It should come as no surprise that memories of the Jewish genocide were a dominant and recurring theme, not only in *Shoah* and *Au Revoir les enfants* but also in Frank Cassenti's *Le Testament d'un poète juif assassiné* (1988) and Bernard Cohn's *Natalia* (1989).

Film in the whole period only rarely anticipated changes in people's attitudes. The movies were, however, the clearest and most influential expression of broader changes; they were able, unlike most works of history or even novels, to make events remote in time seem suddenly close. Film revived the past and stirred memory using the same instrument that we use today to experience history in the making: the image. But of course the use of images entails risks of distortion and therefore anachronism.

Scholarly Memory

If few films were made about the period, thousands of books, papers, and articles were written, reflecting a variety of genres, styles, and shades of opinion. From this enormous volume of material I have attempted to pick out scholarly works, that is, works based on careful research and substantiated by various kinds of documentary evidence—"history books," in short. Instead of attempting an exhaustive selection, I have chosen works representative of certain lines or tendencies of thought concerning the history of the Occupation.

It would, however, be naive of a historian to suppose that scholarly views of history are somehow autonomous or clearly delineated. In this case it was difficult to confine attention strictly to texts written by historians, academics, and journalists because important light has been shed on the period not only by such secondary works but also by eyewitness accounts—even if some eyewitness testimony has only added to the confusion. The historiography of the Occupation (where historiography is broadly understood to include not only works of history per se but also memoirs and autobiographies) evolved along with the Vichy syndrome. This parallel is all the more interesting since the influence of scholarly work has thus far not figured in my analysis.

The Foundations

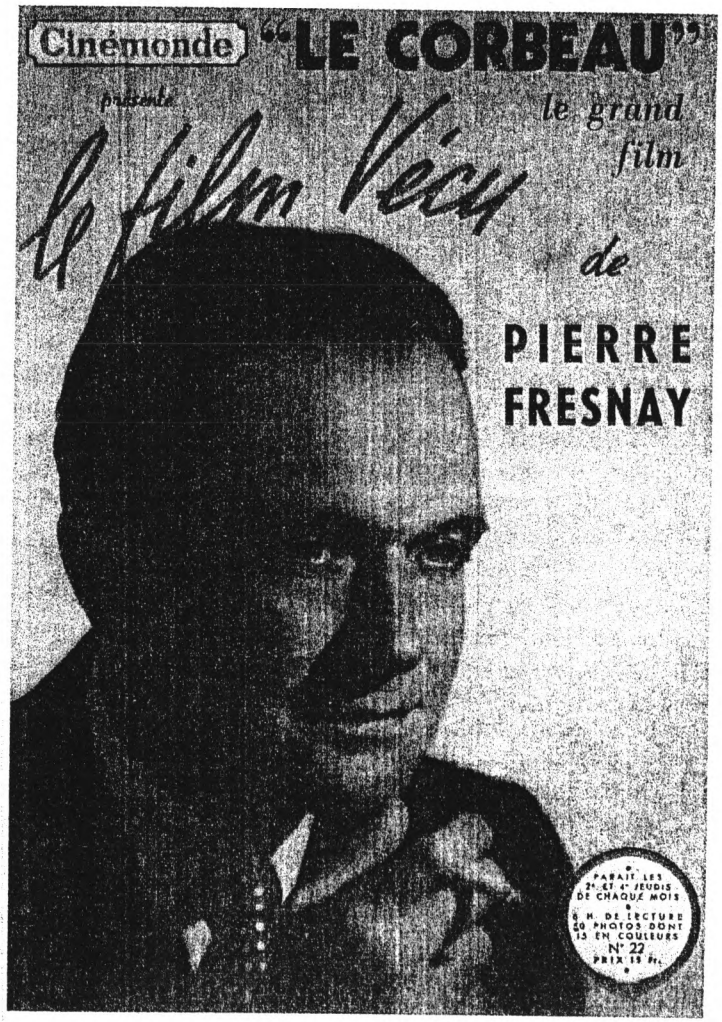
From the Liberation until 1954 the leading figures of the Franco-French civil war dominated the publishing scene with their cacophonous voices. Although top leaders rarely spoke out, slightly less prominent personalities were quick to take up their pens. On the Resistance side, for example, we have Pierre Guillain de Bénouville's *Le Sacrifice du matin* (1946) and Yves Farge's *Rebelles, soldats et citoyens* (1946), to name only two titles from a long list (many of which were mentioned in Chapter 1).

On the Vichy side we find works such as Louis Rougier's *Mission secrète à Londres* (1946), Henri du Moulin de Labarthète's *Le Temps des illusions* (1946), and Louis-Dominique Girard's *Montoire, Verdun diplomatique* (1948), all three written by men close to Marshal Pétain. Representing the collaboration were primarily the posthu-

Sites : the Journal of
20th Century Contemporary
French Studies
vol. 4, no. 2
Fall 2006
pp. 319-341

Henri-Georges Clouzot's Le corbeau *and the Crimes of Women*

Judith Mayne



Few individual films have come to stand so emblematically for a complex and conflicted period of history as Henri-Georges Clouzot's 1943 film *Le corbeau* does in relationship to the German occupation of France during World War II.[1] At the time of the film's release, it was enormously popular yet met with harsh criticism from all official quarters. It was denounced as immoral by the Church, and as anti-French by both the right and the left. The Germans didn't like it either, and contrary to a story circulated by the film's critics, it was never shown in Germany as a lesson in what the French are really like. *Le corbeau* was one of three films singled out for particular scorn in the postwar *épuration*, and Clouzot was initially forbidden to make films again. That ban was lifted a few years later, and Clouzot returned to filmmaking with *Quai des Orfevres*, made in 1947.[2]

While *Le corbeau* has remained a controversial film, it has also entered the mainstream of classical French cinema. One indication of that status was the appearance, in 1950, of a popular film magazine dedicated to the film and to its male lead, Pierre Fresnay. *Cinémonde* published a series of magazines entitled "Le Film vécu," the premise of which was an amply illustrated retelling of an individual film from the point of view of its central character/star (Figure 1). Fresnay appears on the cover of the issue, and after a summary of his film and stage career, *Le corbeau* is retold in the first person. The story begins with the arrival of Dr. Rémy Germain (Fresnay's character) in the town of Saint-Robin ("la petite ville m'était apparue si calme dans son cirque de collines...") and ends with his departure ("Et maintenant, Denise et moi, nous faisons nos valises, pour de bon").[3]

Despite the common sense assertion that Pierre Fresnay's character is indeed the central protagonist of the film, there is something quite jarring about reading a first-person narration of a film that so resolutely distrusts the capacity of any single figure to represent adequately events, crises, or truth. Yet most critical discussions of Clouzot's famous — and infamous — film take for granted the assumption that if the film belongs to any single character, it is surely the character of Dr. Rémy Germain. Indeed, Dr. Germain's activities motivate the exposition of the film; he is both the premier target, and eventually the suspected perpetrator, of the poison-pen letters that infiltrate the town; and his discovery of the truly guilty party closes the film, apparently offering a resolution to the film's mystery. Dr. Germain serves as both the main protagonist of the film and as the stand-in for the spectator watching the film. The only character really competing for the film's ownership, as it were, might be the aging psychiatrist Dr. Vorzet, with whom Germain wages a struggle over meaning and morality, but the Oedipal conflict between the two men only reinforces Germain's status as narrative center of the film.[4]

Clouzot's Le corbeau

While it is impossible to discuss *Le corbeau* without discussing Fresnay's character, in this essay I suggest that it is useful and productive nonetheless to shift attention away from Dr. Germain, and the heterosexual male crises of identity and desire in which he is defined, and in so doing to ask questions about women and gender in *Le corbeau*. Now the representation of women has been addressed in *Le corbeau*, although not in the sustained way that would allow us to understand how much the film relies on assumptions about and queries into gender. Certainly the film displays gender stereotypes, but too often this fact is asserted without further exploration of how the representation of women in the film exceeds and problematizes crises of (male heterosexual) identity and desire.[5] In addition, there are several aspects of the film that turn, crucially and centrally, on what it means for a woman to speak, to represent herself, to tell her story. Gender affects not just the cast of characters, but also the very ways in which narration materializes in the film.[6] That Vichy France promoted deeply patriarchal visions of women's place is well known. Yet too often a recognition of such pervasive patriarchal assumptions can lead to a dismissal of questions of gender as the already known and already obvious. Just as recent historical studies have demonstrated that women and men lived the German occupation of France differently, and were addressed differently by the institutions of both occupation and collaboration, so it is important to address how a film like *Le corbeau* presents its tale of poison-pen letters in gendered terms.[7]

Le corbeau tells the story of how the fictional town of Saint-Robin was deluged with anonymous letters. The first letter we see is addressed to Dr. Germain, and accuses him of having an affair with Laura Vorzet (Micheline Francey), the wife of a local psychiatrist. Early scenes in the film establish a number of suspicions — that Dr. Germain performs abortions; that Marie Corbin, a nurse at the hospital and the sister of Laura, is stealing drugs and is consumed with jealousy over her perception that her sister is carrying on an affair with Dr. Germain; that Dr. Germain is genuinely attracted to Laura Vorzet; and that Denise Saillens, who lives in the same building as Dr. Germain, fakes illness to lure him into bed. Suspicious characters, particularly women, seem to abound in the film, from Marie Corbin, who is a busybody, to Rolande, the fourteen-year-old niece of Denise, who peeks through keyholes.

The anonymous letters increase in number, reaching epidemic proportions, and they reveal increasingly scandalous information about financial misdeeds, adulterous affairs, and general misbehavior. When a cancer patient in the hospital kills himself after receiving a letter telling him that his disease is fatal, suspicions turn to the nurse Marie Corbin. But after she is arrested and put into prison, another letter appears, floating down from a church balcony during mass. Suspicion turns to Dr. Germain, since he is mentioned in virtually all of the letters. As inquiries into Germain's life are mounted, Dr. Germain's own past is revealed; he was a famous brain surgeon, whose wife was expecting a child, and the doctor who treated her allowed both her and the child to die. Hence in his new life in Saint-Robin, Germain — now a general practitioner rather than a surgeon — makes the choice to save the mother's life, and hence the accusations of abortion.

Eventually it is agreed that the culprit must be one of the parishioners seated in the church balcony when the letter drifted down, and they are subjected to a lengthy dictation session in order to weed out the guilty party. Dr. Vorzet presides, as he is a self-described expert in *l'anonymographie*, the study of poison-pen letters. Denise faints during the session, thus pointing to her potential guilt, yet the results of her handwriting are inconclusive. Dr. Germain visits her, and discovers an anonymous letter addressed to him, announcing that Denise is pregnant. Thinking he has discovered the source of the poison-pen letters, Dr. Germain confronts Denise, who admits only to having written this one letter. But, she says, Laura had telephoned her earlier to tell her of a particularly nasty letter she had just received. Germain goes to Laura who denies knowledge of the letter. But until Germain discovers ink marks on Laura's hands, he thinks he has been had by Denise. Dr. Vorzet intervenes, tells Germain that he just discovered his wife's guilt, and accepts Germain's offer to declare her insane. Rejoined with Denise, Germain describes Laura's guilt, but Denise insists that this is not possible. Germain returns to the Vorzet house after Laura has been taken away, and finds Dr. Vorzet, collapsed on his desk, murdered as he was writing a final anonymous letter. His throat was slit, and Germain looks through the open window to see the mother of the cancer patient walk away, her revenge enacted.

Le corbeau is a study in oppositions, apparent and real, as well as their dissolution. Many of these oppositions revolve around Dr. Germain and Dr. Vorzet, particularly insofar as the relationship between rationality and irrationality is concerned. Yet far more space in the film, both visually and narratively, is devoted to the binary op-

Figure 2

positions embodied by women. Between Denise (figure 2) and Laura, one would be hard-pressed to find a better example of the virgin and the whore dichotomy so typical of an entire tradition of female representation in the West: Denise is sexual, Laura is not; Denise wears a nightgown while Laura wears conservative dresses with tight necks; Denise is brunette, while Laura is blonde. The film adds a particularly interesting twist to this standard, if exaggerated, opposition, by staging the horizontal Denise against the vertical Laura! Denise spends the first part of the film quite literally in bed, and her physical affliction — the limp she has as a result of a car accident — is only visible when she emerges from bed, as if so startling a shift (prone to vertical) required an equally striking physical manifestation. Laura, on the other hand, is first seen in the film upright, as she tends to her volunteer duties in the hospital. The obvious contrasts between the two women are sustained, in the early scenes of the film, by the horizontal/vertical distinction, with the accompanying distinction that Laura is mobile while Denise is confined (willingly, but still confined) to her bed.

The character of Denise reiterates Ginette Leclerc's cinematic persona as a vamp, a femme fatale (her most famous role prior to *Le corbeau* was as the unfaithful wife in Marcel Pagnol's *La femme du boulanger*), while Laura (even if she is not a mother) embodies the Aryan ideal of womanhood so visible in Vichy propaganda of the time.[8] In the course of the film, their roles are taken in unexpected directions, since Denise emerges from her femme fatale role — and her bed — as a presumably worthy companion to Dr. Germain, while Laura's immaculate persona conceals a deeply disturbed woman who initiates the flood of anonymous letters. If the two women's roles are reversed in the film — the sexualized woman is really "good," while the pure woman is really "bad" — then other similarities between female characters speak not only to traditional stereotypes of women but also to their undoing. Two of the most likely villains in the film are the nurse Marie Corbin and the post office clerk Rolande. They share a strange kind of outsider status vis-a-vis sexuality — Rolande because she is younger than either Denise or Laura, Marie Corbin because she is older. But perhaps more important, they both embody a type — the surveilling female, obsessively interested in the affairs of others. Of course everyone watches everyone else in *Le corbeau*, but in the case of these two female characters it is cause for a kind of pathology — one of course that is undone in the film in the sense that they too are false leads.

But despite the centrality of women in the creation of oppositions in the film, the most explicit discussion *about* opposition occurs between Germain and Vorzet in what is perhaps the most famous scene in the film. The scene takes place in the schoolroom after Vorzet has led the dictation session. The room is dark, and a ceiling lamp and a globe are visible. Dr. Vorzet tells Dr. Germain his view of the world: "Vous croyez que les gens sont tout bons ou tout mauvais! Vous croyez que le bien, c'est la lumière et que l'ombre, c'est le mal. Mais où est l'ombre? Où est la lumière?" He performs this discourse on the impossibility of dividing the world into black and white by swinging the lamp so that sharp light and dark contrast characterizes the scene in a literal illustration of his words. The nature of opposition is theorized and staged simultaneously. Vorzet prefaces his remarks with the confession that he is a drug addict, and that Marie Corbin stole drugs from the hospital for his benefit (they used to be lovers). Vorzet seems to speak what amounts to a compelling point of view for the film as a whole, even if he does so ironically — i.e., his discourse is enormously self-serving, and his notions of moral relativism not withstanding, they provide a way of shielding his guilt.

There is no question that this scene is central to the film. It offers an explicitly philosophical and moral discussion, and it reads easily as an over arching commentary, standing over the film just as persuasively as Vorzet manipulates the light source. The striking mise-en-scène is unlike anything else we have seen in the film, with perhaps the sole exception of the funeral procession and subsequent chase after Marie Corbin, which was also distinct from the overall style of the film, and was characterized by sharp angles evocative of what we see in this scene. The shift into another register of cinematic representation in both scenes accentuates the function of the schoolroom scene as a discursive center for the film as a whole, for in mirroring, style-wise, the earlier scene, it offers itself as a meditation on it. The earlier scene is one of the most dynamic scenes in the film, and it is structured by a contrast between two women the nurse, Marie Corbin, presumed to be guilty, and the mother, presented in her black mourning dress and veil as an icon of female suffering. The classroom scene between Vorzet and Germain is, in contrast, a meditative scene. Thus if the schoolroom scene is indeed such a privileged site for theoretical reflection, it would seem to follow the age-old rule of classical cinema: women may occupy the visual plane, but men control it.

However, I think it is a mistake to leave Vorzet's discourse, with the sharp contrast of black and white, the swinging lamp, and the shifting shadows, as a kind of master discourse in the film. Just as this scene can be seen in parallel to the earlier funeral scene, virtually every person and every event in *Le corbeau* has a double or a mirror of some kind. The classroom scene is not the resolution of a parallel, but rather it too receives two replies in the scenes that follow.

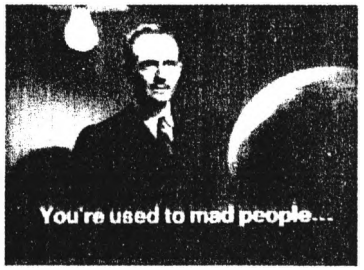


Figure 3

Figure 4

After Vorzet leaves Germain in the school classroom, a dissolve from the swinging lamp to a still one marks the passage of time. It is the next day, and Germain has fallen asleep at the teacher's desk. He

is startled by the arrival of the mother of the suicide victim, who tells him that she now works as a cleaning woman at the school. This woman also manipulates light and shadow, although not in the dramatic way that Vorzet does. She approaches the window, and opens the curtains, so that she and Germain are framed by the window and situated in the morning light. She tells Germain that she is fairly certain who is responsible for the anonymous letters, and that she is waiting for the right moment to attack, at which point she takes out her son's straight razor, with which he killed himself. Shadows are visible, but the lighting is much flatter than in the previous scene, and the conversation less dramatic because there is no manipulation of the light to compare with the swinging lamp. Nor are there any sharp angles to compare with the previous scene. Rather, the conversation between the two is filmed straightforwardly, moving from a two shot of them in front of the window, to a shot reverse shot, in which we see each of them in medium close-up. These close-ups mark a significant shift from the previous conversation between Vorzet and Germain (figures 3 & 4), for we see Germain and the woman at much closer range than was the case with the two male doctors (figures 5 & 6). The casting of the mother is significant here as well, for the actress Sylvie had, only a few months before the opening of *Le corbeau*, played the role of the mother superior in Robert Bresson's film *Les anges du péché*. Indeed, the dress of the mother is deliberately evocative of that earlier role, suggesting her function as avenging angel in whom revenge and purity coexist.

Figure 5

Figure 6

After his conversation with the woman, Germain goes to Denise's apartment, where he discovers her anonymous letter to him. Denise is not in her room when Germain arrives, so he hides until she returns and then confronts her. Denise insists that she did not know any other way to tell Germain of her pregnancy. Denise tells

Germain to look into her eyes to discover the truth of her innocence. In contrast to Vorzet's relativism, Denise *does* divide the world into the opposing camps of intellect and feeling and offers her face as a sign of truth. Yet unlike the mother, who has assured her right to avenge the death of her son, there is not at all the same tone of certainty in Denise's words. Indeed, the scene is strikingly effective yet also quite curious, for the close-ups of Denise's face, with her trembling lips and tearful eyes, and those of Germain, with his eyes wide in apparent astonishment, convey little of the absolute truth that Denise suggests (figures 7 & 8). In this exchange between Germain and Denise, we see extreme close-ups of their faces (comparable extreme close-ups are not used elsewhere in the film), so that virtually any other object within the frame is invisible. Vorzet asserts ambiguity with certainty; Denise asserts certainty in an ambiguous way. In both cases, the encounter provokes a dramatic shift in cinematic representation: extreme light and darkness and extreme angles in the case of Vorzet and Germain, and extreme close-ups in the case of Denise and Germain.

Figure 7

Figure 8

And what of the mother of the suicide victim? As befits her position as a mediator between Vorzet and Denise in this sequence of scenes, she possesses a certainty that shares characteristics with both Vorzet and Denise, and which is different at the same time. Each of these conversations focuses on the nature of truth, from Vorzet's elaborate staging of the light and shadows of his demonstration on relativity, to the mother's blunt insistence, in the bright natural light of morning, that revenge is hers to take, to Denise's emphatic insistence on her innocence and Germain's inability to live in the world of sensation and emotion. Each of these conversations amounts to a challenge to Germain's way of being in the world. In the case of Vorzet and Denise, these challenges evoke drastic changes in the

look of the film, thus calling attention to the scenes but also suggesting their difference from what surrounds them. Vorzet presents his skill as a metteur-en-scène, while Denise presents her face, thus evoking a classically patriarchal division — the man sets the scene, the woman offers her body. But in order for this sexual division of the world to work, Germain has to assume his position as recipient and interpreter of the older man's knowledge, and/or as heterosexual love object of the woman who offers her face as proof of her purity. I suggest that despite his visibility in these scenes, Germain does not assume the positions of narrative authority required of him.

Wedged as it is between the far more dramatic encounters between Vorzet and Germain, and Germain and Denise, it is easy to pass over the scene between the mother and Germain. Yet the scene provides a framework for the concluding images of the film. Here, in the schoolroom, the woman walks toward Germain at the desk; at the end of the film, Germain looks up from Vorzet's desk and watches her depart. Here, she announces her intentions to Germain's horror; then, she commits the act that allows Germain — finally — to understand that Vorzet was guilty.

Arguably the two women are far more adept than Germain at solving the mystery of the raven's identity. Germain is convinced that Denise is the culprit, and then when he discovers Laura's apparent guilt, he is just as certain of her total responsibility for the crime. Denise intuits what the mother of the suicide victim knows, that someone else was responsible. We are not privy to how the mother deduces Vorzet's guilt, but we know that Denise senses Laura's fear too much to believe that she could be totally responsible. Is this a classic example of women's intuition, marshaled here to demonstrate the failures of male rationalism, of logic, of reason? While Germain's powers of deduction fail him, the film makes a telling connection between the three conversations I have described, each underscoring Germain's increasing inability to hear, to listen, to comprehend. Each of these conversations concludes with one of the most standard, classical modes of point of view and authority in the cinema, the shot reverse shot construction. Feminist analyses of shot reverse shot across a wide range of films have demonstrated the extent to which the assertion of cinematic patriarchal authority relies upon the staging of the man as the privileged source of sight, and the woman as object of the look. The extreme close up of Denise would appear to be a clichéd example of the woman's status in her "to-be-looked-atness," for her face fills the frame, offering itself to her male lover.[9] But Germain fails utterly to acquire the authority, cinematic or narrative, that is thrust upon him. The image of his face may well fill the frame, but he does not assume the position of master, of authority, of the privileged male gaze. Rather, Germain departs from the conversation with Vorzet only to be overwhelmed by the mother's plan for revenge and by Denise's declarations. These scenes do not allow Germain to establish authority but rather suggest the threatening possibility that the two women are far more capable of narrative and visual authority than he is.

This sequence of scenes initiates the resolution of the film — or rather, the lack of resolution. Despite the reputation of *Le corbeau* as a stunning thriller, the resolution of the film in its final scenes is perplexing. Vorzet is revealed as the raven, but the revelation occurs very quickly, and it is not as though Laura is blameless. She admits that she wrote the first letter, and she claims Vorzet forced her to write the remaining ones. Noël Burch, noting the inconsistencies in the film's conclusion, says that "l'incertitude demeure sur la part de responsabilité de chacun des membres de ce 'couple infernal.'"[10] While the exact roles played by each do remain unknown, I do not think we need to search for the resolution of this enigma, as Burch does, by claiming that the confusing ending of the film is only a screen for the "real" authors of the anonymous letters — Clouzot and Chavance. For in placing blame on both the man *and* the woman, the film introduces an element of indecidability, of ambiguity, not primarily about who did what, but about gender and its relationship to agency and authority. For the supremely patriarchal figure of Vorzet is as corrupt and deranged as the woman who looks like a Vichy poster for womanhood but acts like a lunatic. And as for the man who supposedly emerges from the depths of hell to assume his identity as a heterosexual and a father, Germain's "transformation" seems to me far more ambiguous than the solution to the letter-writer's identity. True, Germain opens the windows of Denise's room to welcome the voices of the children outside, and he seems to accept her pregnancy. What he says, however, is not exactly a ringing endorsement of the heterosexual plot. When Denise asks, "Maintenant, pour avoir un fils, tu me tuerais à mon tour?" Germain replies: "Peut-être..." However much one might want to make these closing words a reflection of pro-natalist ideology, they work more to leave this newly formed couple in a decidedly ambiguous place. And throughout the final scenes of the film, Germain possesses the same look of stunned incomprehension as he did when faced with the trembling lips and watering eyes of Denise. Germain's function, as a spectator within the film, is to register increasing confusion when faced with the certitude of a mother's desire for revenge and of a woman's certainty about love and emotion. True, he announces

the final words of the film — "Ainsi, c'était Vorzet" — to make clear the guilt of the psychiatrist. But the conclusion of the film does not really belong to him, except in his role as spectator; it belongs to the mother, and to a lesser extent, to Denise. In other words, then, *Le corbeau*'s "conclusion" is the possibility of a world where gender confusion reigns; where women know, understand, and act in the absence of any viable male authority.

It is instructive in this context to examine the history of the genesis of *Le corbeau*. Central to that history is a tale of assumptions about gender and narration that shape the film generally, and more specifically, the various threads that intertwine at the film's conclusion. Louis Chavance's major defense, when faced with the charges against *Le corbeau*, was that he had written a first version of the screenplay in 1933, and that in 1937 he had deposited the screenplay with the "Association des Auteurs de Films." Hence, the film could hardly be seen as complicit with the German occupiers, according to Chavance, and in addition, Clouzot and Chavance both argued that the film criticizes the practice of anonymous letter writing. It is wellknown that anonymous letters of denunciation flourished during World War II in France, and that for the German occupiers, anonymous letters provided a significant source of information about the black market, about Jewish residents, and about Resistance activities. Simply to assert that anonymous letters flourished in occupied France, however, can be a somewhat deceptive and superficial way of situating the film in its historical context. While anonymous letters may well have been a fact of life in occupied France, the practice was not always as encouraged by the German occupiers and the officials of Vichy as some accounts would lead one to believe. The letters provided tips, to be sure, but just as often they were motivated by petty jealousy and personal vendettas.[11]

The proliferation of anonymous letters stands as symptomatic of one of the many paradoxes of Vichy and collaboration. For anonymous letters of denunciation could well have been seen as perpetuating the dreaded image of France as a weak, feminized adversary of Germany, not brave or strong enough to stand up to the invader either in battle or in daily life. The practice of anonymous letter writing corresponds to the worst stereotypes of devious, gossiping, feminine behavior. Vichy officials and French collaborators were determined to combat the image of a feminized, passive France. But the sneaky, passive/aggressive mode of anonymous letter-writing affirms the stereotype. Paradoxically, of course, it was a stereotype upon which the collaborationists and occupiers relied within limits

Whether or not one accepts Chavance's and Clouzot's claim that the film is "against" the practice of anonymous letter-writing, it is certain that for viewers of the film, the most immediate point of reference was the situation of occupied France, and the frenzy that besets the fictional town of Saint-Robin provides a parallel to the experience of occupation. But the connection between the film and occupied France via the anonymous letters can obscure what is one of the most interesting aspects of the evolution of the screenplay of the film. Chavance was inspired by an epidemic of anonymous letters that occurred in the town of Tulle, beginning in 1917. He wrote the screenplay using various news sources, but most important were the writings by Edmond Locard, a police official and a psychiatrist, who investigated and solved the Tulle case.[12]

Louis Chavance's first draft, entitled "L'œil de serpent," dated 1932, recounts a story that is both like and unlike Clouzot's film. A small French town is inundated with a series of anonymous letters. Dr. Monatte, a new doctor in town, is having difficulty establishing a practice because he is perceived as young and has progressive ideas about medicine. His wife, Denise, receives an anonymous letter claiming that Dr. Monatte had an affair with, and performed an abortion on, Laura Doret, a young mother who has decided to stay in her home town while her husband works as a colonial functionary in Africa. Denise believes the letter, since her husband has been treating Laura for her "*troubles nerveux*." Monatte is arrested, but he is released when the letters continue despite his incarceration. The volume of anonymous letters magnifies. Since Monatte finds himself ostracized by the hospital when he attempts to return to work after his arrest, he begins to investigate the matter himself. He immediately suspects a nurse, who is the only person at the hospital spared by the poison-pen, and his suspicions are only multiplied by the fact that the woman is homely and cross-eyed. In an episode that will remain central to Clouzot's otherwise considerable reworking of the screenplay, a cancer patient of the nurse receives a letter saying that his disease is fatal, and he promptly kills himself with a straight razor. At the man's funeral, the nurse's own sister-in-law, Laura (the nurse is the sister of Laura's husband), accuses the nurse. But Monatte no longer believes in the nurse's guilt and he protects her.

The letters achieve epidemic proportions. Local authorities are convinced that there are at least 20 letter-writers, but they also know that "l'œil de serpent" — the instigator's pen name — is the source, as well as the most vicious letter-writer of all. The letters will stop, they are certain, once this individual is caught. The tension contin-

ues to mount and the entire town is obsessed by the anonymous letters. One day Denise tells Monatte that at the market, she overheard that another doctor at the hospital was denounced in a letter as an abortionist. But when Monatte makes a comment to this colleague later in the day, the fellow doctor is stunned, for he had quite literally just received the letter. How could Monatte have known? Fearing of course that the veil of suspicion is once more falling upon him, Monatte rushes to Denise to ask her who spoke of the letter — it was Laura Doret. When Monatte confronts Laura, she denies the accusation that she is the serpent's eye. But Monatte sees, on the desk blotter, the imprint of the handwriting of the letter-writer and goes to the police. Laura at last confesses to him but offers this justification: her husband has returned from Africa and has been living with her in secret; he has been driven crazy by tropical disease and he threatened to kill Laura if she did not agree to write the letters. She points to a window in a door, where indeed a man's silhouette can be seen walking back and forth. Monatte is confused and leaves. In the last scene of Chavance's first screenplay, Laura laughs hysterically as she watches her son in the next room; he parades a life-size puppet back and forth across the room.

In another, somewhat later version of the screenplay, Chavance makes the ending even clearer: Monatte, when he confronts Laura, hears a male voice call her name. He returns a few moments later and finds her dead, poisoned. The truth is finally told (although Chavance does not specify how), that Laura's husband died in the colonies, and she invented the story of his return to cover up her own guilt as the serpent's eye. The voice belonged not to Laura's husband, but rather to a neighbor calling her.

In yet another later version of the screenplay, other details are added: the character of Dr. Vorzet is introduced as Laura's father; Laura's husband is still in the colonies. Laura is no longer the villain, but rather it is Vorzet, Laura's father, who is unmasked as the perpetrator. As in Clouzot's final version of the film, the mother of the cancer patient kills him with the same knife her son used to kill himself. Clearly this version of the screenplay is quite close to the final film, although it required yet another version of the screenplay for Vorzet to be identified as Laura's husband, not her father, with the husband in the colonies finally banished from the script.[13]

Of the changes that Clouzot made to Chavance's original story, five stand out as particularly striking. First and foremost, of course, the identity of the villain changes, from Laura to Vorzet. In Clouzot's film, Laura is the "false conclusion," the lure, but Vorzet is revealed, finally, to be the ultimate culprit. Second, while the changes undergone by the character of Denise are less striking, they are crucial, for in Clouzot's final film, Denise may be many things, but she is definitely not bourgeois, as she is described in Chavance's screenplay. Once Dr. Monatte is given a past with the tragic death of a wife, Denise is free, as it were, to be the other woman, rather than Monatte's wife, in Clouzot's film. Third, a new character is added to the final film, Rolande, the prepubescent post office worker, who mirrors Marie Corbin. Fourth, while abortion is certainly present in the earliest version of Chavance's screenplay, it doesn't have the same importance it does in the final film. In Clouzot's film, no one aside from Dr. Monatte is accused of performing abortions, so that the suspicion of abortion contributes far more heavily to the characterization of Dr. Germain in the film.

Fifth and finally, one of the distinctive features of Chavance's screenplay, even into the final version of the film script, is the pronounced emphasis on the epidemic quality of the poison-pen letters. In virtually every version of the screenplay, attention is drawn to the fact that there may well be one central culprit, but that the writing of the letters spreads across the town like a contagious virus.[14] While there is no question that a frenzy seizes the town in Clouzot's film, only briefly is it suggested that letter-writing has moved beyond the activities of the raven. The letters reveal what is repressed and feared in the town and in that sense are a powerful catalyst, but there is not the same strong sense that all the villagers have been overpowered by the desire to write poison-pen letters. True, there is a scene at the post office in the final film where the epidemic quality of the anonymous letters is discussed, but it is quite subdued in comparison to Chavance's earlier drafts. In this context, Denise's desperate decision to write a fake letter appears all the more striking. In other words, in the absence of the stress on the epidemic quality of poison-pen letters, individual pathology is emphasized even more strongly.[15]

In order to appreciate fully the range of the changes that Clouzot made to Chavance's script, and in order to understand why those changes are so significant in terms of the place of gender in *Le corbeau*, we need to look more closely at the inspiration for Chavance's screenplay. For Clouzot adapted not only a screenplay but a legend. As I've noted, Chavance was inspired by the events that began in 1917 in the small town of Tulle. The anonymous letters that flooded the town were full of accusations — which in some cases were true — about adulterous love affairs, political intrigues, and other details of the private lives of its citizens. At least a thousand letters were written over a span of three years, and their impact was

all the more strong given that like many small towns in France during World War I, a good portion of its male residents had gone to war.[16]

The culprit was clever. Once surveillance of mailboxes began, the letter-writer dropped letters in churches, in market baskets, and in the street. The letter-writer seemed to have a wealth of knowledge about the inhabitants of the town. One anonymous letter, found by a young boy in the street, provided a chart listing married couples and their lovers. Another letter, addressed to a Mme de Martin, informed the society woman in question that the "de" in her named was acquired falsely, and proceeded to tell a tale about the crimes of the woman's great-grandfather, then threatened to send letters to all of the woman's acquaintances if she did not immediately remove the "de" from her name. Mme de Martin panicked, for the story — which she thought safely ensconced in the past — was true. A frequent theme of the letters sent to the wives of soldiers was a detailed and obscene description of the husbands' sexual activities while away. The letters had a kind of mesmerizing effect on the town; they provided an ongoing melodrama, either by playing upon long-existing rivalries or by introducing new items of gossip. But when a man died after receiving an anonymous letter, supposedly from his wife, confessing to infidelities and describing her own suicide, it was decided that more serious action was required. (Two stories circulated about the man's death: one that he shot himself as soon as he received the letter, the second that he was committed to a mental institution and died shortly after.)[17]

From 1917 to 1921, even though virtually all of the residents of the town had been affected by the "eye of the tiger," the author's per name, no one knew who was responsible. Finally, in 1921, Jean Laval, a bureau chief and archivist, decided to pursue legal means to try to find the guilty party. Through a series of events worthy of the best detective story, it became obvious that whoever was writing the letters had privileged access to archival information, not just gossip about the various unsavory pasts and presents of the inhabitants. For the letters often revealed knowledge that could have come only from court and municipal records. The judge in charge of the case, M. Richard, began to suspect none other than Jean Laval himself. At this point an expert was brought in on the case, Edmond Locard, director of the police laboratory in Lyon and something of an expert on "*anonymographie*" — anonymous letter-writing.

The first break in the case came when Jean Laval reported to the judge that a woman of his acquaintance had received a letter and had reported its contents to Laval's sister, Angèle. Richard discovered that the woman had received the letter on a Friday, but Angèle had described its contents to her brother two days before. Suspicion was obviously cast, then, on Angèle Laval. Dr. Locard subjected Angèle to a lengthy dictation session, beginning with the letter that had just been sent. Angèle wrote slowly, as if attempting to invent a new style of writing for herself; Locard recognized her attempt to stall for time, and put pressure on her to speed up. Angèle became increasingly distraught, and Locard threatened to take her to a hospital and perform gynecological surgery if she didn't calm down! And so she did, continuing to write for hours, until finally her handwriting became identical to that of the poison-pen letters. Yet Laval continued to maintain her innocence. During the trial, Laval's lawyers claimed that Laval was far too well brought up to commit such crime, and noted in particular that the letters were so full of pornographic detail, so obscene, that it was impossible to imagine where Angèle Laval would have gotten such information. Laval was found guilty, but her sentence was relatively light: a one-month suspended jail sentence and numerous fines.

According to Dr. Locard, who was an expert in both anonymous letters and handwriting analysis, Angèle Laval met virtually every criterion that characterized poison-pen letter-writers. First and foremost, Laval was female; virtually all cases of *l'anonymographie* were women. In the old days, according to Locard, they would have been classified as "hysterics" (interestingly, Locard himself was not above using the diagnosis of "hysteria"). Laval initially wrote the letters in cahoots with family members, especially her mother; only later did Laval become the principal author. She wrote thousands of letters. An epidemic quality was attained, the letters by Laval setting loose a frenzy of accusations and other anonymous letters. Laval was from the proverbial "good family," as all letter-writers were, but suffered from a lack of attention and an overreaction to a romantic slight (she and a co-worker competed for the attentions of their boss). Laval had sent an anonymous letter to her boss and then told him about receiving one herself accusing her of having an affair with him. Laval's attempt to forge a connection between her and her boss misfired, for he soon married Laval's co-worker. Laval thus devised a plan to cast suspicion on the couple. Such a preoccupation with sexuality and romantic intrigue was again a common characteristic of these letter-writers, according to Locard.[18]

The two primary actors in the Tulle affair, for the purposes of *Le corbeau*, are Angèle Laval, of course, and Edmond Locard. Given the differences between Chavance's screenplays and the final film, one could easily assume that Clouzot turned a 1920s story into a

1940s film; i.e., transformed the primarily psychological tale of anonymous letter writing into a more topical one, made to the measure of a different time where "lettres anonymes" had an entirely different meaning. But Clouzot too was influenced directly by the Laval case. There are features of the Tulle affair that were not included by Chavance in his original screenplays, but which did emerge in the final version of the film.

Three of these features are particularly important. First, in the early scenes of the film, Laura and Germain meet because both have received anonymous letters, and only at the end of the film do we realize that Laura wrote the letters. Laura thus imitates Angèle Laval's initiation into anonymous letter writing, when she used letters to pursue a romance with her boss. Second, if it is unclear, at the end of Clouzot's film, what the division of labor is between Vorzet and Laura in the writing of the letters, this is in fact reflective of an aspect of *l'anonymographie* emphasized by Locard, but not Chavance, that the letter-writing almost always begins as a family affair, until one person takes over (unlike Vorzet and Laura, of course, Locard stressed that the primary author was female). Finally, the most striking reference to the Tulle case in *Le corbeau* is the dictation session, for the scene is a direct reference to Locard's dramatic discovery of Angèle Laval's guilt. Now Clouzot may cite aspects of the Laval case, but the results are quite different than in Chavance's screenplays. Laura's disclosure to Germain of the anonymous letter she has received does not misfire, as it did with Laval; it seems rather to produce the effect so desired by Laval (and Laura), to intensify the attraction between her and the man she loved. The dictation session, which was a bravura demonstration of Locard's expertise in the Laval case, turns out to be a massive screen, as it were, for Vorzet, for the authority of the expert is put on display and then, later, undermined.

Chavance's tale, in all of its versions, reads like a case history à la Locard. Edmond Locard is a kind of implicit narrator of Chavance's screenplays, for his theories on anonymous letter-writers form the substance of the script: Laura is as perfect a suspect as Angèle Laval, for she is female, from a "good home," preoccupied with sexual matters, and "hysterical." Some of her worst attacks are for herself — a typical strategy, according to Locard. But Clouzot takes an entirely different approach: virtually all of Dr. Vorzet's theorizing becomes a way of deflecting suspicion from himself. The man of science, in interpreting and theorizing the causes of mental illness, is in fact interpreting himself. The expert may well stand back and evaluate the behavior of himself and others, but this does not assure his innocence; in fact, any possibility of marking a line between the guilty and the innocent is undone. By casting Dr. Vorzet as Locard, Clouzot undermines the interpretive authority that was so central to Chavance's screenplays.

The "*affaire de Tulle*," as it was called, received enormous attention. During Laval's trial, journalists from cities all over France were in attendance. Laval's case of *anonymographie* did not only inspire imitators in the town of Tulle, but in other towns as well, and Locard reported being much in demand after the Laval case to solve similar cases. But it is impossible to say whether the case of Angèle Laval would have been an immediate point of reference for spectators in 1943, more than twenty years after the "*affaire de Tulle*." And given that "*lettres anonymes*" had a much more immediate point of reference, namely the occupation and the surveillance they implied, one suspects that Angèle Laval was of secondary importance in the reception of *Le corbeau*. Angèle Laval was not Christine or Léa Papin, or Violette Nozière, famous female criminals of the 1930s whose exploits have remained highly visible over the years. Yet enough of Angèle Laval's story remains in Clouzot's film to justify the retracing of the 1943 film back to the events that began in 1917.

Despite all of the echoes of Tulle that remain in *Le corbeau*, the change of the letter-writer from a woman to a man is the most striking and dramatic change. Why the gender switch? Burch and Sellier note that the mocking of patriarchal authority was central to many films of the Vichy era, and so this unmasking of Vorzet would appear to be consistent with other films of the era.[19] The figure of patriarchal authority is not only mocked; he is feminized. As an *anonymographe*, Vorzet displays a collapse of authority, knowledge, and manhood. And as I've already suggested, I do not think Germain can be seen as occupying the void left by Vorzet's feminization. Cinematically, Germain can hardly function in a shot reverse shot as the bearer of the look; narratively, he fails to read the clues that surround him. When we look closely at the conclusion of the film, two figures emerge in a mirror-like symmetry to fill the void: Denise and the mother.

Before Denise can assume this function as reflection to the avenging angel embodied by the mother, she has to pass a test of sorts: an attempted abortion, one of many events that arrive quickly at the conclusion of the film. When Germain is at the Vorzet home, after the supposed realization of Laura's guilt, Vorzet receives a phone call with the information that Denise has just fallen down the steps; she later tells Germain that she did it on purpose.) The mother may avenge successfully her son's death, and Denise may fail in

her attempted abortion, but both women must be marked as criminal. It has been noted many times that abortion is one of the most prevalent markers of the film's situation in the Occupation. Yet abortion has a curious presence in the film.

We are introduced to Germain after he has committed what is, technically, an abortion — he saves the mother's life rather than the child's. In the early scenes of the film, much is said *about* abortion without ever saying the words "*avorter*" or "*avorteur*," which are uttered well after the preoccupation with abortion has been established. Rather, the word "*avorter*" is a perturbing signifier in the film. The very name of the villain of the film — Vorzet — echoes and masks simultaneously the word "*avorter*" French. The name is first spoken when the cancer patient asks Laura if she is indeed "*la femme du Docteur Vorzet.*" The first anonymous letter we see in the film (as read by Germain) is displayed for the camera, and we see the phrase: "*tu fais joujou avec la femme à Vorzet.*" The simple shift in prepositions creates a linguistic slippage, so that the simple pronunciation of the name "Vorzet," and in particular, "*la femme à Vorzet,*" alludes to the word "*avorter.*" Vorzet by his very name, and Germain by his supposedly suspicious activities, bear the mark of abortion. Since the theme of abortion is so often cited as a way of defining the film in its historical context, it is then appropriate to recall that abortion was not commonly associated with men during the Occupation. It was primarily a woman's crime, and it was primarily women who were prosecuted for performing abortions.[20] Vorzet is the primary example in the film of the feminization of men — as a writer of anonymous letters, he performs what is standardly a woman's crime, and his name recalls yet another crime associated with women. But Germain cannot escape from the taint of womanhood either. The point here is not to claim a pro-natalist ideology for the film, for the way in which the signifier of "abortion" is presented in the film cannot sustain the weight of such a clearly defined ideological agenda. The evocation of abortion, like the male appropriation of the "female" crime of anonymous letter-writing, create a universe where men can no longer act like men, can no longer be like men. What's left are the women who also "speak" through their crimes. In the face of Vichy France, this is a pessimistic portrait of a world gone gender-berserk. With the hindsight of history, it is a masterful yet deeply patriarchal attempt to demonstrate the consequences of what happens when women speak.

Works Cited

Bertin-Maghit, Jean-Pierre. *Le cinéma français sous l'Occupation.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994.

Billard, Pierre. *L'Age Classique du cinéma français: du cinéma parlant à la Nouvelle Vague.* Paris: Flammarion, 1995.

Bocquet, José-Louis, and Marc Godin. *Henri-Georges Clouzot cinéaste.* Sèvres: Editions La Sirène, 1993.

Burch, Noël, and Geneviève Sellier. *La drôle de guerre des sexes du cinéma français 1930-1956.* Paris: Nathan, 1996.

Camus, Michel. "Angèle Laval." *Les grandes affaires criminelles.* Ed. Roger Bernasconi. Vol. 9. Geneva: Edito-Service S.A., 1975. 87-1903.

Chavance, Louis. "Archives Scénaristiques, *Le corbeau.*" Bibliothèque Du Film. Paris. 1932-1938.

Cinémonde. *Le film vécu: Le corbeau, le grand film de Pierre Fresnay.* Paris. 1950.

Darmon, Pierre. *Le monde du cinéma sous l'Occupation.* Paris: Stock, 1997.

Ehrlich, Evelyn. *Cinema of Paradox: French Filmmaking under the German Occupation.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Garçon, François. *De Blum à Pétain: cinéma et société française (1936-1944).* Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1984.

Halimi, André. *La délation sous l'Occupation.* Paris: Alain Moreau, 1983.

Leclerc, Ginette. *Ma vie privée.* Paris: Editions de la Table Ronde, 1963.

Locard, Edmond. *Les anonymographes.* Brussels: Ferdinand Larcier, 1923.

---. "L'affaire de Tulle: un cas typique d'*anonymographie.*" *L'Avenir Médical* 20.7(1923): 3-7.

---. *Mémoires d'un criminologiste.* Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1958.

---. *La vipère.* Paris: Editions de la flamme d'or, 1954.

Muel-Dreyfus, Francine. *Vichy et l'éternel féminin.* Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1996.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen* 16.3(1975): 6-18.

Oms, Marcel. "*Le Corbeau* et ses quatre vérités." *Les Cahiers de la Cinémathèque* 8(1973): 58-61.

Pollard, Miranda. *Reign of Virtue: Mobilizing Women in Vichy France.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Ragache, Gilles, and Jean-Robert Ragache. *La vie quotidienne des écrivains et des artistes sous l'Occupation, 1940-1944.* Paris: Hachette, 1988.

Semple, Jeanie. "Ambiguities in the Film *Le ciel est à vous.*" *Vichy France and the Resistance.* Ed. Roderick Kedward and Roger Austin. London: Croom Helm, 1985. 123-32.

Siclier, Jacques. *La France de Pétain et son cinéma.* Paris: Editions Henri Veyrier, 1981.

Sims, Gregory. "Henri-Georges Clouzot's *Le corbeau* (1943): The Work of Art as Will to Power." *MLN* 114 (1999): 743-79.

Sweets, John F. *Choices in Vichy France.* New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Tarr, Carrie. "Wilful Women in French Cinema under the German Occupation." *Women and Representation.* Ed. Diana Knight and Judith Still. Nottingham, England: Women Teaching French Occasional Papers (3), 1995. 75-91.

Notes

1. I am grateful to the staff members at the Bibliothèque du Film (BIFI) and the Bibliothèque de la Littérature Policière (BILIPO) in Paris for access to research materials and for their wonderful assistance.
2. For discussions of the controversy surrounding *Le Corbeau*, see Bertin-Maghit; Billard pp. 404-406; Bocquet & Godin 32-41; Darmon 205-208; Ehrlich 177-191; Oms; Ragache & Ragache 163-181; Siclier ch. 15; and Sims.
3. Cinémonde, *Le film vécu: Le Corbeau, le grand film de Pierre Fresnay.* Paris, 1950.
4. The most sustained analysis to date of *Le Corbeau* is by Gregory Sims, in which the "will to power" (in the Nietzschean sense) is analyzed in depth with "Germain as its main agent/patient" (776).

5. Ehrlich's analysis of the gendered oppositions in the film is more thorough than most (esp. 181-182). The only analysis of the film to focus primarily on gender is Noël Burch's analysis in Burch & Sellier (191-196). Yet Burch also takes the preoccupation with stereotypical oppositions as evidence of the sexism of the film, without need of further elaboration.
6. For discussions of the importance of gender in films made during the Occupation, see Burch & Sellier (87-214); Semple; Tarr.
7. For examples of recent investigations and re-investigations into women and France during World War II, see Muel-Drefus; Pollard.
8. Ginette Leclerc described her screen persona as follows: "Ma première spécialité, tout le monde la connaît: les vamps, les femmes de petite vertu ou très légères" (100). For discussions of Vichy propaganda featuring the ideal woman, see Pollard, esp. ch. 2.
9. Mulvey's classic essay remains the most eloquent and concise statement of the connection between gender and point of view in the cinema.
10. Burch, 193.
11. On the prevalence of anonymous letters of denunciation during the Occupation, see Halimi. In his study of the town of Clermont-Ferrand during World War II, for example, John F. Sweets notes: "The French police did not encourage anonymous denunciations, in part because the majority of such tips, upon investigation, were revealed to have originated in personal jealousies or commercial rivalries and seldom led the police to the discovery of serious criminal behavior... The regional prefect spoke out against the practice... in February 1942 he ordered newspapers to publish a notice saying that anonymous denunciations were a serious offense and the perpetrators would be tracked down" (23).
12. All references to the different versions of the screenplay are drawn from the Archives Scénaristiques on *Le Corbeau* at the Bibliothèque du Film, Paris.
13. Noël Burch points out that the shift in Vorzet's role, from father to husband of Laura, makes the film far more reflective of typical themes of Vichy cinema, in particular, the "critique du père incestueux et idéalisation des femmes..." (195).
14. A montage sequence is described in the final version of the screenplay that I saw, in which a series of various takes on the phenomenon of letter-writing makes clear that the poison-pen letters have become part of the culture of the town. One man instructs his wife to write in capital letters; a young woman receives a bouquet of flowers with a note written in imitation of the poison-pen letters; a radio program reports on all the strange places that the letters are appearing. At a village fair, a pickpocket retrieves an anonymous letter from a bystander's pocket; a carnival barker announces a fortune-teller by saying that she can see more than the poison-pen letter-writer can. The letters even become prized possessions, with a collector offering to buy all the letters in existence.
15. Gregory Sims points out another change of emphasis from the original screenplays to the final film: the increasing importance of the couple Germain and Denise. In Sims's analysis, Denise's "Dionysian instinctiveness" is what allows the transformation of Germain: "...through the formation of the couple of Germain and (the now pregnant) Denise, the film undeniably presents a clear sense of resolution, of *catharsis*, only not on the terrain of reason, but on the terrain of the instinctive, the sensual" (772). I suggest that the only resolution the film offers is one of gender disorder.
16. Included in the Archives Scénaristiques on *Le Corbeau* at the BIFI are articles by Locard on the Laval case, as well as a letter from Locard to Chavance accompanying one of the articles. Chavance's different versions of the screenplay are clearly indebted to Locard's work, and the designation of Laura as the culprit follows Locard's theories about anonymous letter-writing. In his essay on *Le Corbeau*, Gregory Sims describes the different versions of the screenplay and also notes Locard's influence on Chavance, as well as the ways in which Vorzet resemble Locard. But Sims makes one assertion for which I find no evidence in Locard's writings, namely that the guilty parties were "often old maids suffering from sexual repression" (768). The women suffer from sexual repression, to be sure, but Locard goes out of his way to describe Angèle Laval as an attractive, if thin, woman of thirty-five. Sims regards the designation of Vorzet as the culprit in the film as a turning on its head of the stereotype of the "'scientific logic of the repressed old maid" (768). I would argue, rather, that the creation of Vorzet as the letter-writer has no source whatsoever in Locard's writings, and that Laura, as initially conceived, is the epitome of Locard's portrait of the anonymous letter-writer. The point is important in order to appreciate how thoroughly the designation of Vorzet as the villain in the final version of *Le Corbeau* departs from established opinion about *l'anonymographie*.
17. My summary of the "*affaire de Tulle*" is drawn from these sources: Locard's two articles on the case (both 1923); his novelized treatment of the case (1954); his memoirs (1958); and Camus.
18. These characteristics of anonymous letter-writing are drawn from Locard's two 1923 essays.
19. Burch & Sellier, 15. Burch and Sellier also suggest that cinema of the Occupation was unique in its development of a new vision of possibilities for women, possibilities virtually unexplored in literature or in the press of the time.
20. Francine Muel-Dreyfus, describing the effects of the legislation which proscribed the death penalty for performing abortions, notes: "La peine de mort et les peines lourdes introduites par la loi du 15 février 42 n'auront donc finalement touché que des femmes, dont certaines appartenaient aux professions soignantes, et un seul homme dont on ne sait rien; aucun médecin n'est concerné. Femmes d'origine populaire, vivant dans des villes de province où le repérage des suspectes mobilise le pire, elles sont les accusées et les condamnées les plus faciles d'une étape de la lutte contre l'avortement qui en fait un crime contre la sécurité publique" (326-27).

Movies and Methods. Ed. Bill Nichols. Vol. 1
Berkeley + Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1976.

A CERTAIN TENDENCY OF THE FRENCH CINEMA

FRANÇOIS TRUFFAUT

This article (originally written in January 1954 for Cahiers du Cinéma, *no. 31) is one of the important historical landmarks in the growth of* auteur *criticism, and bears glowing testimony to the polemical context in which it developed. In no uncertain terms, Truffaut attacks the "Tradition of Quality" which he saw as the province of the much despised* metteur-en-scène (*in contrast to the* auteur), *as well as a monolith of anti-clerical, anti-military, anti-bourgeois negativism masquerading as fidelity to literary classics. John Hess' two-part article in* Jump Cut, *nos. 1 and 2, "La Politique des Auteurs," examines the political viewpoint expressed here and in other early French* auteurist *writings quite thoroughly, stating:* "La politique des auteurs *was, in fact, a justification couched in aesthetic terms, of a culturally conservative, politically reactionary attempt to remove film from the realm of social and political concern, in which the progressive forces of the Resistance had placed all the arts in years immediately after the war." Hess' article is highly recommended as a supplementary text.*

Truffaut's article also poses a clear problem for film scholarship insofar as most of the films to which he refers (the Tradition of Quality) are virtually unmentioned in recent film histories and seldom exhibited in English-speaking countries. Many national cinemas remain nearly unknown outside of their officially designated hey-day. That gaps also exist in the most readily available information on the French cinema – which Truffaut and Godard, among others, resurrected from moribund complacency – is not too surprising. Any thorough evaluation of the growth and development of the auteur *theory and the New Wave, however, will surely need to bring to light many of these half-forgotten films from the 1940's and early 1950's in France.*

Another useful source of early French auteur *criticism is* Godard on Godard *with its rich supply of Godard's early writing.*[1] *Godard's essays – "Bergmanorama," a celebration of Bergman, or "A Time to Love and A Time to Die," even more giddy praise of this film by Douglas Sirk – are good examples of the glorification of beauty and moral vision above all else, a radical departure from Bazin's praise of self-effacement and a drastically different point of view from that of Godard's own later work.*

•

These notes have no other object than to attempt to define a certain tendency of the French cinema – a tendency called "psychological realism" – and to sketch its limits.

1. *Godard on Godard,* translated and edited by Tom Milne (New York: The Viking Press, 1972).

TEN OR TWELVE FILMS

If the French cinema exists by means of about a hundred films a year, it is well understood that only ten or twelve merit the attention of critics and cinéphiles, the attention, therefore of "Cahiers."

These ten or twelve films constitute what has been prettily named the "Tradition of Quality"; they force, by their ambitiousness, the admiration of the foreign press, defend the French flag twice a year at Cannes and at Venice where, since 1946, they regularly carry off medals, golden lions and *grands prix.*

With the advent of "talkies," the French cinema was a frank plagiarism of the American cinema. Under the influence of *Scarface,* we made the amusing *Pépé Le Moko.* Then the French scenario is most clearly obliged to Prévert for its evolution: *Quai Des Brumes (Port Of Shadows)* remains the masterpiece of *poetic realism.*

The war and the post-war period renewed our cinema. It evolved under the effect of an internal pressure and for *poetic realism* – about which one might say that it died closing *Les Portes De La Nuit* behind it – was substituted *psychological realism,* illustrated by Claude Autant-Lara, Jean Dellannoy, René Clement, Yves Allegret and Marcel Pagliero.

SCENARISTS' FILMS

If one is willing to remember that not so long ago Delannoy filmed *Le Bossu* and *La Part De L'Ombre,* Claude Autant-Lara *Le Plombier Amoureux* and *Lettres D'Amour,* Yves Allégret *La Boîte Aux Rêves* and *Les Démons De L'Aube,* that all these films are justly recognized as strictly commercial enterprises, one will admit that, the successes or failures of these cinéastes being a function of the scenarios they chose, *La Symphonie Pastorale, Le Diable Au Corps (Devil In The Flesh), Jeux Interdits (Forbidden Games), Manèges, Un Homme Marche Dans La Ville,* are essentially *scenarists' films.*

TODAY NO ONE IS IGNORANT ANY LONGER . . .

After having sounded out directing by making two forgotten shorts, Jean Aurenche became a specialist in adaptation. In 1936, he was credited, with Anouilh, with the dialogue for *Vous N'Avez Rien A Déclarer* and *Les Dé Gourdis De La 11e.*

At the same time Pierre Bost was publishing excellent little novels at the N.R.F.

Aurenche and Bost worked together for the first time while adapting and writing dialogue for *Douce,* directed by Claude Autant-Lara.

Today, no one is ignorant any longer of the fact that Aurenche and Bost rehabilitated adaptation by upsetting old preconceptions of being faithful to the letter and substituting for it the contrary idea of being faithful to the spirit – to the point that this audacious aphorism has been written: "An honest adaptation is a betrayal" (Carlo Rim, "Traveling and Sex-Appeal").

In adaptation there exists filmable scenes and unfilmable scenes, and that instead of omitting the latter (as was done not long ago) it is necessary to invent *equivalent* scenes, that is to say, scenes as the novel's author would have written them for the cinema.

"Invention without betrayal" is the watchword Aurenche and Bost like to cite, forgetting that one can also betray by omission.

The system of Aurenche and Bost is so seductive, even in the enunciation of its principles, that nobody even dreamed of verifying its functioning close-at-hand. I propose to do a little of this here.

The entire reputation of Aurenche and Bost is build on two precise points: 1. *Faithfulness* to the spirit of the works they adapt: 2. The talent they use.

THAT FAMOUS FAITHFULNESS . . .

Since 1943 Aurenche and Bost have adapted and written dialogue for: *Douce* by Michel Davet, *La Symphonie Pastorale* by Gide, *Le Diable Au Corps* by Radiguet, *Un Recteur A L'Ile De Sein (Dieu A Besoin Des Hommes – God Needs Men)* by Queffelec, *Les Jeux Inconnus (Jeux Interdits)* by François Boyer, *Le Blé En Herbe* by Colette.

In addition, they wrote an adaptation of *Journal D'Un Curé De Campagne* that was never filmed, a scenario on *Jeanne D'Arc* of which only one part has been made (by Jean Delannoy) and, lastly, scenario and dialogue for *L'Auberge Rouge* (*The Red Inn*) (directed by Claude Autant-Lara).

You will have noticed the profound diversity of inspiration of the works and authors adapted. In order to accomplish this tour de force which consists of remaining faithful to the spirit of Michel Davet, Gide, Radiguet, Queffelec, François Boyer, Colette and Bernanos, one must oneself possess, I imagine, a suppleness of spirit, a habitually geared-down personality as well as singular eclecticism.

You must also consider that Aurenche and Bost are led to collaborate with the most diverse directors: Jean Delannoy, for example, sees himself as a mystical moralist. But the petty meanness of *Garçon Sauvage (Savage Triangle)*, the shabbiness of *La Minute De Vérité*, the insignificance of *La Route Napoléon* show rather clearly the intermittent character of that vocation.

Claude Autant-Lara, on the contrary, is well known for his non-conformity, his "advanced" ideas, his wild anti-clericalism; let us recognize in this cinéaste the virtue of always remaining, in his films, honest with himself.

Pierre Bost being the technician in tandem; the spiritual element in this communal work seems to come from Jean Aurenche.

Educated by the Jesuits, Jean Aurenche has held on to nostalgia and rebellion, both at the same time. His flirtation with surrealism seemed to be out of sympathy for the anarchists of the thirties. This tells how strong his personality is, also how apparently incompatible it was with the personalities of Gide, Bernanos, Queffelec, Radiguet. But an examination of the works will doubtless give us more information.

Abbot Amédée Ayffre knew very well how to analyse *La Symphonie Pastorale* and how to define the relationship between the written work and the filmed work:

"Reduction of Faith to religious psychology in the hands of Gide, now becomes a reduction to psychology, plain and simple . . . with this qualitative abasement we will now have, according to a law well-known to aestheticians, a corresponding quantitative augmentation. New characters are added: Piette and Casteran, charged with representing certain sentiments. Tragedy becomes drama, melodrama." (*Dieu Au Cinéma*, p. 131).

WHAT ANNOYS ME . . .

What annoys me about this famous process of equivalence is that I'm not at all certain that a novel contains unfilmable scenes, and even less certain that these scenes, decreed unfilmable, would be so for everyone.

Praising Robert Bresson for his faithfulness to Bernanos, André Bazin ended his excellent article "La Stylistique de Robert Bresson," with these words. "After *The Diary Of A Country Priest*, Aurenche and Bost are no longer anything but the Viollet-Leduc of adaptation."

All those who admire and know Bresson's film well will remember the admirable scene in the confessional when Chantal's face "began to appear little by little, by degrees" (Bernanos).

When, several years before Bresson, Jean Aurenche wrote an adaptation of *Diary*, refused by Bernanos, he judged this scene to be unfilmable and substituted for it the one we reproduce here.

"Do you want me to listen to you here?" He indicates the confessional.

"I never confess."

"Nevertheless, you must have confessed yesterday, since you took communion this morning?"

"I didn't take communion."

He looks at her, very surprised.

"Pardon me, I gave you communion."

Chantal turns rapidly towards the pri-Dieu she had occupied that morning.

"Come see."

The curé follows her. Chantal indicates the missal she had left there.

"Look in this book, Sir. Me, I no longer, perhaps, have the right to touch it."

The curé, very intrigued, opens the book and discovers, between two pages, the host that Chantal had spit out. His face is stupified and confused.

"I spit out the host," says Chantal.

"I see," says the curé, with a neutral voice.

"You've never seen anything like that, right?" says Chantal, harsh almost triumphant.

"No, never," says the curé, very calmly.

"Do you know what must be done?"

The curé closes his eyes for a brief instant. He is thinking or praying, he says, "It is very simple to repair, Miss. But it's very horrible to commit."

He heads for the altar, carrying the open book. Chantal follows him.

"No, it's not horrible. What is horrible is to receive the host in a state of sin."

"You were, then, in a state of sin?"
"Less than the others, but then – it's all the same to them."
"Do not judge."
"I do not judge, I condemn," says Chantal with violence.
"Silence in front of the body of Christ!"
He kneels before the altar, takes the host from the book and swallows it.

In the middle of the book, the curé and an obtuse atheist named Arsène are opposed in a discussion on Faith. This discussion ends with this line by Arsène, "When one is dead, everything is dead." In the adaptation, this discussion takes place on the very tomb of the curé, between Arsène and another curé, and *terminates the film.* This line, "When one is dead, everything is dead," carries, perhaps the only one retained by the public. Bernanos did not say, for conclusion, "When one is dead, everything is dead," but "What does it matter, all is grace."

"Invention without betrayal," you say – it seems to me that it's a question here of little enough invention for a great deal of betrayal. One or two more details. Aurenche and Bost were unable to make *The Diary Of A Country Priest* because Bernanos was alive. Bresson declared that were Bernanos alive he would have taken more liberties. Thus, Aurenche and Bost are annoyed because someone is alive, but Bresson is annoyed because he is dead.

UNMASK

From a simple reading of that extract, there stands out:

1. A constant and deliberate care to be *unfaithful* to the spirit as well as the letter;
2. A very marked taste for profanation and blasphemy.

This unfaithfulness to the spirit also degrades *Le Diable Au Corps* – a love story that becomes an anti-militaristic, anti-bourgeois film, *La Symphonie Pastorale* – a love story about an amorous pastor – turns Gide into a Béatrix Beck, *Un Recteur à l'île de Sein* whose title is swapped for the equivocal one of *Dieu A Besoin Des Hommes* in which the islanders are shown like the famous "cretins" in Buñuel's *Land Without Bread.*

As for the taste for blasphemy, it is constantly manifested in a more or less insidious manner, depending on the subject, the *metteur-en-scène* nay, even the star.

I recall from memory the confessional scene from *Douce,* Marthe's funeral in *Le Diable,* the profaned hosts in that adaptation of *Diary* (scene carries over to *Dieu A Besoin Des Hommes*), the whole scenario and the character played by Fernandel in *L'Auberge Rouge,* the scenario *in toto* of *Jeux Interdits* (joking in the cemetery).

Thus, everything indicates that Aurenche and Bost are the authors of *frankly* anti-clerical films, but, since films about the cloth are fashionable, our authors have allowed themselves to fall in with that style. But as it suits them – they think – not to betray their convictions, the theme of profanation and blasphemy, dialogues with double meanings, turn up here and there to prove to the guys that they know the art of "cheating the producer," all the while giving him satisfaction, as well as that of cheating the "great public," which is equally satisfied.

This process well deserves the name of "alibi-ism"; it is excusable and its use is necessary during a time when one must ceaselessly feign stupidity in order to work intelligently, but if it's all in the game to "cheat the producer," isn't it a bit scandalous to re-write Gide, Bernanos and Radiguet?

In truth, Aurenche and Bost work like all the scenarists in the world, like pre-war Spaak and Natanson.

To their way of thinking, every story includes characters A, B, C, and D. In the interior of that equation, everything is organized in function of criteria known to them alone. The sun rises and sets like clockwork, characters disappear, others are invented, the script deviates little by little from the original and becomes a whole, formless but brilliant: a new film, step by step makes its solemn entrance into the "Tradition of Quality."

SO BE IT, THEY WILL TELL ME . . .

They will tell me, "Let us admit that Aurenche and Bost are unfaithful, but do you also deny the existence of their talent . . .?" Talent, to be sure, is not a function of fidelity, but I consider an adaptation of value only when written by a *man of the cinema.* Aurenche and Bost are essentially literary men and I reproach them here for being contemptuous of the cinema by underestimating it. They behave, *vis-a-vis* the scenario, as if they thought to reeducate a delinquent by finding him a job; they always believe they've "done the maximum" for it by embellishing it with subtleties, out of that science of nuances that make up the slender merit of modern novels. It is, moreover, only the smallest caprice on the part of the exegetists of our art that they believe to honor the cinema by using literary jargon. (Haven't Sartre and Camus been talked about for Pagliero's work, and phenomenology for Allegret's?)

The truth is, Aurenche and Bost have made the works they adapt insipid, for *equivalence* is always with us, whether in the form of treason or timidity. Here is a brief example: in *Le Diable Au Corps,* as Radiguet wrote it, Francois meets Marthe on a train platform with Marthe jumping from the train while it is still moving; in the film, they meet in the school which has been transformed into a hospital. What is the point of this *equivalence*? It's a decoy for the anti-militarist elements added to the work, in concert with Claude Autant-Lara.

Well, it is evident that Radiguet's idea was one of *mise-en-scène,* whereas the scene invented by Aurenche and Bost is *literary.* One could, believe me, multiply these examples infinitely.

ONE OF THESE DAYS . . .

Secrets are only kept for a time, formulas are divulged, new scientific knowledge is the object of communications to the Academy of Sciences and

since, if we will believe Aurenche and Bost, adaptation is an exact science, one of these days they really could apprise us in the name of what criterion, by virtue of what system, by what mysterious and internal geometry of the work, they abridge, add, multiply, devise and "rectify" these masterpieces.

Now that this idea is uttered, the idea that these equivalences are only timid astuteness to the end of getting around the difficulty, of resolving on the soundtrack problems that concern the image, plundering in order to no longer obtain anything on the screen but scholarly framing, complicated lighting-effects, "polished" photography, the whole keeping the "Tradition of Quality" quite alive – it is time to come to an examination of the ensemble of these films adapted, with dialogue, by Aurenche and Bost, and to research the permanent nature of certain themes that will explain, without justifying, the constant *unfaithfulness* of two scenarists to works taken by them as "pretext" and "occasion."

In a two line résumé, here is the way scenarios treated by Aurenche and Bost appear:

La Symphonie Pastorale: He is a pastor, he is married. He loves and has no right to.

Le Diable Au Corps: They make the gestures of love and have no right to.

Dieu A Besoin Des Hommes: He officiates, gives benedictions, gives extreme unction and has no right to.

Jeux Interdits: They bury the dead and have no right to.

Le Blé En Herbe: They love each other and have no right to.

You will say to me that the book also tells the same story, which I do not deny. Only, I notice that Gide also wrote *La Porte Etroite*, Radiguet *La Bal Du Comte d'Orgel,* Colette *La Vagabonde* and that each one of these novels did not tempt Delannoy or Autant-Lara.

Let us notice also that these scenarios, about which I don't believe it useful to speak here, fit into the sense of my thesis: *Au-Delà Des Grilles, Le Château De Verre, L'Auberge Rouge* . . . .

One sees how competent the promoters of the "Tradition of Quality" are in choosing only subjects that favor the misunderstandings on which the whole system rests.

Under the cover of literature – and, of course, of quality – they give the public its habitual dose of smut, non-conformity and facile audacity.

THE INFLUENCE OF AURENCHE AND BOST IS IMMENSE . . .

The writers who have come to do film dialogue have observed the same imperatives; Anouilh, between the dialogues for *Dé Gourdis de la 11e* and *Un Caprice De Caroline Chérie* introduced into more ambitious films his universe with its affection of the bizarre with a background of nordic mists transposed to Brittany (*Pattes Blanches*). Another writer Jean Ferry, made sacrifices for fashion, he too, and the dialogue for *Manon* could just as well have been signed

by Aurenche and Bost: "He believed me a virgin and, in private life, he is a professor of psychology!" Nothing better to hope for from the young scenarists. They simply work their shift, taking good care not to break any taboos.

Jacques Sigurd, one of the last to come to "scenario and dialogue," teamed up with Yves Allégret. Together, they bequeathed the French cinema some of its blackest masterpieces: *Dédée D'Anvers, Manèges, Une Si Jolie Petite Plage, Les Miracles N'Ont Lieu Qu'une Fois, La Jeune Folle.* Jacques Sigurd very quickly assimilated the recipe; he must be endowed with an admirable spirit of synthesis, for his scenarios oscillate ingeniously between Aurenche and Bost, Prévert and Clouzot, the whole lightly modernized. Religion is never involved, but blasphemy always makes its timid entrance thanks to several daughters of Mary or several good sisters who make their way across the field of vision at the moment when their presence would be least expected (*Manèges, Une Si Jolie Petite Plage*).

The cruelty by which they aspire to "rouse the trembling of the bourgeois" finds its place in well-expressed lines like: "he was old, he could drop dead" (*Manèges*). In *Une Si Jolie Petite Plage*, Jane Marken envies Berck's prosperity because of the tubercular cases found there: *Their family comes to see them and that makes business good!* (One dreams of the prayer of the rector of Sein Island).

Roland Laudenbach, who would seem to be more endowed than most of his colleagues, has collaborated on films that are most typical of that spirit: *La Minute De Vérité, Le Bon Dieu Sans Confession, La Maison Du Du Silence.*

Robert Scipion is a talented man of letters. He has only written one book; a book of pastiches. Singular badges: the daily frequenting of the Saint-Germain-des-Prés cafés, the friendship of Marcel Pagliero who is called the Sartre of the cinema, probably because his films resemble the articles in "Temps Modernes." Here are several lines from *Amants De Brasmort*, a populist film in which sailors are "heroes," like the dockers were in *Un Homme Marche Dans La Ville:*

"The wives of friends are made to sleep with."

"You do what agrees with you; as for that, you'd mount anybody, you might well say."

In one single reel of the film, towards the end, you can hear in less than ten minutes such words as: *prostitute, whore, slut* and *bitchiness.* Is this realism?

PREVERT IS TO BE REGRETTED . . .

Considering the uniformity and equal filthiness of today's scenarios, one takes to regretting Prévert's scenarios. He believed in the Devil, thus in God, and if, for the most part, his characters were by his whim alone charged with all the sins in creation, there was always a couple, the new Adam and Eve, who could end the film, so that the story could begin again.

PSYCHOLOGICAL REALISM, NEITHER REAL NOR PSYCHOLOGICAL . . .

There are scarcely more than seven or eight scenarists working regularly for the French cinema. Each one of these scenarists has but one story to tell, and, since each only aspires to the success of the "two greats," it is not exaggerating to say that the hundred-odd French films made each year tell the same story: it's always a question of a victim, generally a cuckold. (The cuckold would be the only sympathetic character in the film if he weren't always infinitely grotesque: Blier-Vilbert, etc. . . .) The knavery of his kin and the hatred among the members of his family lead the "hero" to his doom; the injustice of life, and for local color, the wickedness of the world (the curés, the concierges, the neighbors, the passers-by, the rich, the poor, the soldiers, etc. . . .)

For distraction, during the long winter nights, look for titles of French films that do not fit into this framework and, while you're at it, find among these films those in which this line or its equivalent does not figure, spoken by the most abject couple in the film: "It's always they that have the money (or the luck, or love, or happiness). It's too unjust, in the end."

This school which aspires to realism destroys it at the moment of finally grabbing it, so careful is the school to lock these beings in a closed world, barricaded by formulas, plays on words, maxims, instead of letting us see them for ourselves, with our own eyes. The artist cannot always dominate his work. He must be, sometimes, God and, sometimes, his creature. You know that modern play in which the principal character, normally constituted when the curtain rises on him, finds himself crippled at the end of the play, the loss of each of his members punctuating the changes of acts. Curious epoch when the least flash-in-the-pan performer uses Kafkaesque words to qualify his domestic avatars. This form of cinema comes straight from modern literature – half-Kafka, half Bovary!

A film is no longer made in France that the authors do not believe they are re-making Madame Bovary.

For the first time in French literature, an author adopted a distant, exterior attitude in relation to his subject, the subject becoming like an insect under the entomologist's microscope. But if, when starting this enterprise, Flaubert could have said, "I will roll them all in the same mud – and be right" (which today's authors would voluntarily make their exergue), he could declare afterwards "I am Madame Bovary" and I doubt that the same authors could take up that line and be sincere!

MISE-EN-SCENE, METTEUR-EN-SCENE, TEXTS

The object of these notes is limited to an examination of a certain form of cinema, from the point of view of the scenarios and scenarists only. But it is appropriate, I think, to make it clear that the *metteurs-en-scène*

are and wish to be responsible for the scenarios and dialogues they illustrate.

Scenarists' films, I wrote above, and certainly it isn't Aurenche and Bost who will contradict me. When they hand in their scenario, the film is done; the *metteur-en-scène,* in their eyes, is the gentleman who adds the pictures to it and it's true, alas! I spoke of the mania for adding funerals everywhere. And, for all that, death is always juggled away. Let us remember Nana's admirable death, or that of Emma Bovary, presented by Renoir; in *La Pastorale*, death is only a make-up job and an exercise for the camera man: compare the close-ups of Michèle Morgan in *La Pastorale*, Dominique Blanchar in *Le Secret De Mayerling* and Madeleine Sologne in *L'Eternel Retour*: it's the same face! Everything happens *after* death.

Let us cite, lastly, that declaration by Delannoy that we dedicate, with perfidy, to the French scenarists: "When it happens that authors of talent, whether in the spirit of gain or out of weakness, one day let themselves go to "write for the cinema," they do it with the feeling of lowering themselves. They deliver themselves rather to a curious temptation towards mediocrity, so careful are they to not compromise their talent and certain that, to write for the cinema, one must make oneself understood by the lowliest. ("*La Symphonie Pastorale* ou L'Amour Du Métier," review Verger, November 1947).

I must, without further ado, denounce a sophism that will not fail to be thrown at me in the guise of argument: "This dialogue is spoken by abject people and it is in order to better point out their nastiness that we give them this hard language. It is our way of being moralists."

To which I answer: it is inexact to say that these lines are spoken by the most abject characters. To be sure, in the films of "psychological realism" there are nothing but vile beings, but so inordinate is the authors' desire to be superior to their characters that those who, perchance, are not infamous are, at best, infinitely grotesque.

Well, as for these abject characters, who deliver these abject lines – I know a handful of men in France who would be INCAPABLE of conceiving them, several cinéastes whose world-view is at least as valuable as that of Aurenche and Bost, Sigurd and Jeanson. I mean Jean Renoir, Robert Bresson, Jean Cocteau, Jacques Becker, Abel Gance, Max Ophuls, Jacques Tati, Roger Leenhardt; these are, nevertheless, French cinéastes and it happens – curious coincidence – that they are *auteurs* who often write their dialogue and some of them themselves invent the stories they direct.

THEY WILL STILL SAY TO ME . . .

"But why," they will say to me, "why couldn't one have the same admiration for all those cinéastes who strive to work in the bosom of this "Tradition of Quality" that you make sport of so lightly? Why not admire Yves Allégret as much as Becker, Jean Delannoy as much as Bresson, Claude Autant-Lara as much as Renoir?" ("Taste is made of a thousand distastes" – Paul Valéry).

Well – I do not believe in the peaceful co-existence of the "Tradition of Quality" and an "*auteur's* cinema."

Basically, Yves Allégret and Delannoy are only caricatures of Clouzot, of Bresson.

It is not the desire to create a scandal that leads me to depreciate a cinema so praised elsewhere. I rest convinced that the exaggeratedly prolonged existence of *psychological realism* is the cause of the lack of public comprehension when faced with such new works as *Le Carrosse D'Or* (*The Golden Coach*), *Casque D'or*, not to mention *Les Dames Du Bois De Boulogne* and *Orphée*.

Long live audacity, to be sure, still it must be revealed as it is. In terms of this year, 1953, if I had to draw up a balance-sheet of the French cinema's audacities, there would be no place in it for either the vomiting in *Les Orgueilleux* (*The Proud And The Beautiful*) or Claude Laydu's refusal to be sprinkled with holy water in *Le Bon Dieu Sans Confession* or the homosexual relationships of the characters in *Le Salaire De La Peur* (*The Wages Of Fear*), but rather the gait of *Hulot*, the maid's soliloquies in *La Rue De L'Estrapade*, the *mise-en-scène* of *La Carrosse D'Or*, the direction of the actors in *Madame de* (*The Earrings Of Madame De*), and also Abel Gance's studies in Polyvision. You will have understood that these audacities are those of *men of the cinema* and no longer of scenarists, directors and literateurs.

For example, I take it as significant that the most brilliant scenarists and *metteurs-en-scène* of the "Tradition of Quality" have met with failure when they approach comedy: Ferry-Clouzot *Miguette Et Sa Mère*, Sigurd-Boyer *Tous Les Chemins Mènent A Rome*, Scipion-Pagliero *La Rose Rouge*, Laudenbach-Delannoy *La Route Napoléon*, Auranche-Bost-Autant-Lara *L'Auberge Rouge* or, if you like, *Occupe-toi d'Amélie*.

Whoever has tried, one day, to write a scenario wouldn't be able to deny that comedy is by far the most difficult genre, the one that demands the most work, the most talent, also the most humility.

ALL BOURGEOIS . . .

The dominant trait of psychological realism is its anti-bourgeois will. But what are Aurenche and Bost, Sigurd, Jeanson, Autant-Lara, Allégret, if not bourgeois, and what are the fifty thousand new readers, who do not fail to see each film from a novel, if not bourgeois?

What then is the value of an anti-bourgeois cinema made by the bourgeois for the bourgeois? Workers, you know very well, do not appreciate this form of cinema at all even when it aims at relating to them. They refused to recognize themselves in the dockers of *Un Homme Marche Dans La Ville*, or in the sailors of *Les Amants De Brasmort*. Perhaps it is necessary to send the children out on the stairway landing in order to make love, but their parents don't like to hear it said, above all at the cinema, even with "benevolence." If the public likes to mix with low company under the alibi of literature, it also likes to do it under the alibi of society. It is instructive to consider the programming of films in Paris, by

neighborhoods. One comes to realize that the public-at-large perhaps prefers little naive foreign films that show it men "as they should be" and not in the way that Aurenche and Bost believe them to be.

LIKE GIVING ONESELF A GOOD ADDRESS . . .

It is always good to conclude, that gives everyone pleasure. It is remarkable that the "great" *metteurs-en-scène* and the "great" scenarists have, for a long time, all made minor films, and the talent they have put into them hasn't been sufficient to enable one to distinguish them from others (those who don't put in talent). It is also remarkable that they all came to "Quality" at the same time, as if they were giving themselves a good address. And then, a producer – even a director – earns more money making *Le Blé En Herbe* than by making *Le Plombier Amoureux*. The "courageous" films are revealed to be very profitable. The proof: someone like Ralph Habib abruptly renounces demi-pornography, makes *Les Compagnes De La Nuit* and refers to Cayatte. Well, what's keeping the André Tabets, Companeer, the Jean Guittons, the Pierre Vérys, the Jean Lavirons, the Ciampis, the Grangiers, from making, from one day to the next, intellectual films, from adapting masterpieces (there are still a few left) and, of course, adding funerals, here, there and everywhere?

Well, on that day we will be in the "Tradition of Quality" up to the neck and the French cinema, with rivalry among "psychological realism," "violence," "strictness," "ambiguity," will no longer be anything but one vast funeral that will be able to leave the studio in Billancourt and enter the cemetery directly – it seems to have been placed next door expressly, in order to get more quickly from the producer to the grave-digger.

Only, by dint of repeating to the public that it identified with the "heroes" of the films, it might well end by believing it, and on the day that it understands that this fine big cuckold whose misadventures it is solicited to sympathize with (a little) and to laugh at (a lot), is not, as had been thought, a cousin or neighbor down the hall but ITSELF, that abject family ITS family, that scoffed-at religion ITS religion – well, on that day it may show itself to be ungrateful to a cinema that will have labored so hard to show it life as one sees it on the fourth floor in Saint-German-des Prés.

To be sure, I must recognize it, a great deal of emotion and taking-sides are the controlling factors in the deliberately pessimistic examination I have undertaken of a certain tendency of the French cinema. I am assured that this famous "school of psychological realism" had to exist in order that, in turn, *The Diary Of a Country Priest, La Carrosse D'Or, Orpheus, Casque D'Or, Mr. Hulot's Holiday* might exist.

But our authors who wanted to educate the public should understand that perhaps they have strayed from the primary paths in order to become involved with the more subtle paths of psychology; they have passed on to that sixth grade so dear to Jouhandeau, but it isn't necessary to repeat a grade indefinitely!

Notes

(The original translation of this article in *Cahiers du Cinema in English*, no. 1, did not indicate the exact points in the text to which these notes refer.)

1. *La Symphonie Pastorale*. Characters added to the film: Piette, Jacques' fiancée; Casteran, Piette's father. Characters omitted: the Pastor's three children. In the film, no mention is made of what happens to Jacques after Gertrude's death. In the book, Jacques enters an order.

Operation *Symphonie Pastorale*: a. Gide himself writes an adaptation of his book; b. This adaptation is judged "unfilmable"; c. Jean Aurenche and Jean Delannoy, in turn, write an adaptation; d. Gide refuses it; e. Pierre Bost's entry on the scene conciliates everyone.

2. *Le Diable Au Corps*. On the radio, in the course of a program by André Parinaud devoted to Radiguet, Claude Autant-Lara declared in substance, *"What led me to make a film out of Le Diable Au Corps was that I saw it as an anti-war novel."*

On the same program, Francois Poulenc, a friend of Radiguet's, said he had found nothing of the book on seeing the film.

3. To the proposed producer of *The Diary Of A Country Priest* who was astonished to see the character of Doctor Delbende disappear in the adaptation, Jean Aurenche (who had signed the script) answered, *"Perhaps, in ten years, a scenarist will be able to retain a character who dies midway through the film but, as for me, I don't feel capable of it."* Three years later, Robert Bresson retained Doctor Delbende and allowed him to die in the middle of the film.

4. Aurenche and Bost never said they were "faithful." This was the critics.

5. *Le Blé En Herbe*. There was a adaptation of Colette's novel as early as 1946. Claude Autant-Lara accused Roger Leenhardt of having plagiarized Colette's *Le Blé En Herbe* with his *Les Dernières Vacances*. The arbitration of Maurice Garcon went against Claude Autant-Lara. With Aurenche and Bost the intrigue imagined by Colette was enriched by a new character, that of Dick, a lesbian who lived with the "White Lady." This character was suppressed, several weeks before the film was shot, by Madame Ghislaine Auboin, who "reviewed" the adaptation with Claude Autant-Lara.

6. The characters of Aurenche and Bost speak, at will, in maxims. Several examples: *La Symphonie Pastorale*: "Ah! It would be better if children like that were never born." "Not everyone has the luck to be blind." "A cripple is someone who pretends to be like everyone else."

Le Diable Au Corps (a soldier has lost a leg): "He is perhaps the last of the wounded." "That makes a fine leg for him."

Jeux Interdits: François: "What does this mean – 'to put the cart before the horse?' " Berthe: "Oh, it's what we're doing." (They are making love.) François: "I didn't know that's what it was called."

7. Jean Aurenche was on the crew of *Les Dames Du Bois De Boulogne*, but he had to leave Bresson because of incompatibility of inspiration.

8. An extract from the dialogue Aurenche and Bost wrote for *Jeanne D'Arc* was published in "La Revue Du Cinéma;" #8, page 9.

9. In fact, "psychological realism" was created parallel to "poetic realism," which had the tandem Spaak-Feyder. It really will be necessary, one day, to start an ultimate quarrel with Feyder, before he has dropped definitively into oblivion.

TOWARDS A THEORY OF FILM HISTORY

ANDREW SARRIS

Sarris is much more a critic than a theorist and is the first to admit that the so-called auteur *theory is "merely a system of tentative priorities . . . a table of values that converts film history into directorial autobiography." Or, as Jim Kitses puts it:*

The term describes a basic principle and a method, no more and no less: the idea of personal authorship in the cinema and – of key importance – the concomitant responsibility to honour all of a director's works by a systematic examination in order to trace characteristic themes, structures, and formal qualities. In this light the idea of the auteur *does not seem to me to solve all our problems as much as to crystallize them. Can we speak defensibly of a director who transcends his forms? Of genre as a part of the industrial complex that the filmmaker must dominate?*[1]

But as a method it has been at the center of some of the most extended controversy in film study, primarily in relation to the Hollywood film. Some continue to examine Hollywood from a sociological, plot-theme point of view (The Celluloid Weapon, *White and Averson, Boston: Beacon Press, 1972*), *and some do so from an entertainment-but-surely-not-art viewpoint ("Trash, Art and the Movies," Pauline Kael, in* Going Steady, *Boston: Little, Brown, 1970) but both these approaches run the risk of failing to distinguish adequately the stylistic and thematic preoccupations of individual directors. On the other hand, many non-*auteur *critics are hard put to show appreciation for the entire gamut of styles and concerns represented by Frank Borzage, Blake Edwards, Sam Fuller, Otto Preminger, Nicholas Ray, and Douglas Sirk – to name a few*

1. *Horizons West*, Jim Kitses (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1969), p. 7.

from Cahiers du Cinema, The: 60s. No. Wave
New Cinema, Reevaluating Hollywood.
ed. Jim Hillier. Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 1986.

10 Francois Truffaut: 'Evolution of the New Wave': Truffaut in interview with Jean-Louis Comolli, Jean Narboni (extracts)

('Entretien avec François Truffaut', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 190, May 1967)

Our last interview was more than three years ago[1] *and a lot has happened in French cinema since then, so we'd like to ask you what you think of the evolution of the 'New Wave'.*

The other night I saw on television a vague argument between Claude Mauriac and Melville. And the only time they were in agreement was when they said, 'Of course, the New Wave was very disappointing'. Then they went on to something else, as though they had stated a fact. That shocked me. If you recall the New Wave as it was originally: to make a first film with a reasonably personal theme before you were thirty-five – well, there was an extraordinary richness there, every promise was fulfilled, and the New Wave started similar movements going in every country of the world, which was something quite unexpected.

The New Wave was born in 1959, and by the end of 1960 it was already an object of contempt. For a year it had some prestige in public opinion. The turning point, the switch from praise to denigration, was marked by the film made by La Patellière and Michel Audiard, *Rue des Prairies*, which was promoted as an 'Anti-New-Wave' film: 'Jean Gabin squares up to the New Wave'. That's where the demagogy started. I mean, the journalists who had launched the movement decided to give people the clichés they wanted to read and nothing else. Before *Rue des Prairies*, when Jean-Luc, Resnais, Malle, me or others were being interviewed we used to say: 'The New Wave doesn't exist, it means nothing'. But afterwards you had to change, and it was from that moment that I declared myself as belonging to this movement. Today, in '67, you have to be proud to have been, and to be, part of the New Wave, like being Jewish during the Occupation.

The New Wave is constantly being attacked, but always in a cowardly way because those who make the attacks don't bother either to define it or to cite names and titles. No need for impulsive list-making, but all the same we can note the emergence during the last three years of Alain Jessua, Claude Berri, José Giovanni, René Allio, Luc Moullet and several

others. These aren't occasional film-makers, they're people who'll go on working, who inevitably belong to the New Wave, to the French cinema, and whose films will go to festivals and be shown abroad. . . .

People who say 'The New Wave has failed' without defining what they mean by that, I suppose they're thinking of 'intellectual' films which were not successful at the box-office, and with this in mind they refuse to 'label' films which pleased them or were successful – an arbitrary division since the New Wave is just as much *L'Homme de Rio* as *L'Immortelle*, *Le Vieil homme et l'enfant* as *La Musica*, *Les Cœurs verts* as *Un Homme et une femme*, *La Vie de Château* as *Brigitte et Brigitte*. That's why it's idiotic to generalize all the time, and as someone said, that in itself is a generalization! The New Wave did not have an aesthetic programme, it was simply an attempt to rediscover a certain independence which was lost somewhere around 1924, when films became too expensive, a little before the talkies. For us, in 1960, to make a film was to imitate D. W. Griffith shooting his films in the Californian sun before even the birth of Hollywood. At that time directors were all very young – it's astonishing to realize that Hitchcock, Chaplin, King Vidor, Walsh, Ford, Capra all made their first film before they were twenty-five. It was a young man's profession being a film-maker, and so it should be. So we must have the young men coming on, like Guy Gilles or Lelouch or even younger people, camera in hand, perched on the side of a helicopter, prepared to swell up like a balloon from mosquito bites in the Amazon, etc.

That's a very broad and generous definition of the New Wave . . . It takes in a lot of people: Lelouch, Rappeneau . . .

I don't see how you can define them except by age. Lelouch shoots with a hand-held camera and without a carefully planned script: if he isn't part of the New Wave, then it doesn't exist.[2]

[. . .]

In an interview once you talked of the way you've been criticized for your moderation, your 'classicism', as opposed to some of the aesthetic developments which have been made in cinema during recent years. What's your view of that?

I count on remaining a stranger to these aesthetic developments, since I simply can't do anything which I don't feel deeply. [. . .] I think Rohmer's definition is a good one, when he distinguishes films in which cinema favours the characters from those in which cinema is at the service of the story.[3] However, I don't fit myself in here because I steer a middle course. *Fahrenheit* is somewhere in between these two categories. For the audience it's the story which counts whereas I was more interested in the cinema side of it. But in general I'm more with those who use cinema to tell a story, as in *Les 400 coups* or *La Peau douce*.

From this point of view the best story-teller at the moment is actually Eric Rohmer. In *La Collectionneuse* cinema serves a narrative which is at once extraordinarily subtle and absolutely simple. The film moves with a quiet assurance such as you don't often find in the French cinema. You'd have to go back to *Un Condamné à mort s'est échappé*, where you can sense

this mastery, this control being exercised not just over each shot but over the whole film as well.

There are films which are beautiful or moving or sympathetic in their hesitations, their tentativeness, their way of looking for cinema while gliding round it (*La Loi du survivant*, for example), but what impresses me in *La Collectionneuse* is the certainty you can feel in every set-up, every shot change, the 'this is how it is and it couldn't be otherwise' side of it.

La Collectionneuse is also visually beautiful – the neutral, discreet beauty of the Hitchcock Vistavision films. Instead of the usual way films have of alternating day scenes with night scenes, Rohmer succeeds in making us aware of every hour of the day: he has domesticated the sun, the light, shadows, and he's done it without 'effects' which are extraneous to the story being told.

You could see that Bresson, in *Le Procès de Jeanne d'Arc*, was aiming at something which would be all-absorbing – an invisible style, absolute neutrality, an integral and anonymous narrative – but after *Au hasard, Balthazar* and *Mouchette* I no longer think that. Whereas *La Collectionneuse*, which is the most logical film in the world, seems to me, by dint of its precision and its simplicity, to reach that anonymity of execution which sets me dreaming.

[. . .]

Again, my favourite film-makers are all scriptwriter-directors, because after all what is *mise en scène* exactly? It's the *putting together of the decisions made* during the preparation, shooting and completion of a film. I think that all the options open to a director – of script, of what to leave out, of locations, actors, collaborators, camera angles, lenses, shot composition, sound, music – prompt him to make *decisions*, and what we call *mise en scène* is clearly the common destination of all the thousands of *decisions* taken during those six, nine, twelve or sixteen months of work. That's why 'partial' directors, those who are only concerned with the one aspect of filming, even if they're talented, interest me less than Bergman, Buñuel, Hitchcock, Welles, who *are* their films completely.

[. . .]

I'm sometimes unhappy about details in my films, and they can be numerous, but for some time what's given me confidence is the awareness that I've rarely been wrong as far as my intentions were concerned, the preliminary idea, the point of departure. [. . .] The only thing that worries me, as I've told you, is the idea of being 'out', but frankly I have no desire to be 'in'. If it happens, yes, but wanting it to happen is something I couldn't put up with. I just couldn't arrange things like that, just making films which are 'modern'. I approve of that in Godard because it's instinctive to him. In a dozen films Godard has never made any allusion to the past, even in his dialogue. Think about that: not a single Godard character has talked about their parents or their childhood – extraordinary. What's more, a study of what is not in Godard's films would be just as intriguing [illegible] He' inte[illegible] mo[illegible] perso[illegible]

and the fact that he's Swiss is important. One day someone ought to look at the Swiss aspect of Godard's films – the Switzerland which is the liking for lay-out, watches, modern gadgets, secret bank accounts and all that.

But nearly all the films which imitate Godard are indefensible because they miss the essential thing. They'll imitate his free and easy manner but forget – and for good reason – his despair. They'll imitate the word-play but not the malice.

My distrust of fashion extends to the language people are using nowadays. For instance, I can't bring myself to use a phrase which keeps creeping into *Cahiers*: 'On the level of. . . .' [. . .]

Cinema, for me, is an art of prose. Definitively. The thing is to make films that look good without having an air about them or having an air of nothing to them. I feel very strongly about that, and it's why I can't rise to the Antonioni bait – too immodest. Poetry irritates me, and when people send me letters with poems in them I throw them straight into the wastepaper basket. I like poetic prose – Cocteau, Audiberti, Genêt and Queneau – but only prose. I like cinema because it's prosaic, it's an indirect, unemphasized art, it conceals as much as it reveals. The film-makers I like all have at least this one thing in common – a shared modesty: Buñuel, who refuses to do more than one take; Welles, who shortens his 'beautiful' shots until they're virtually invisible; Bergman and Godard, who play down the importance of what they do by working at top speed; Rohmer, who works like a documentary director; Hitchcock, who's so involved emotionally with his films that he pretends he's only thinking about the money; Renoir, who affects to leave it all to chance – all of them instinctively reject the poetic approach. Just to finish what I'm saying about being 'modern', I don't know if I'm being reactionary, but I don't go along with the critical line which consists of saying: 'After such and such a film it will no longer be possible to watch neatly packaged stories, etc.' Although I like films as new as *Deux ou trois choses . . ., Man is not a Bird, Barrier* and so on, I think that if *The Magnificent Ambersons, Le Carrosse d'or* or *Red River* were here now, in '67, they would be the best films of the year. So I've decided to continue making the same kind of films, which involve either telling a story or pretending to tell a story – there's no difference. Deep-down I'm not 'modern', and if I pretended to be so it would be artificial. In any case I wouldn't be happy with it, and that's reason enough for not doing it.

Translated by David Wilson

Notes

1 *Cahiers* 138, December 1962, translated as (extracts) 'Interview with François Truffaut' in Graham, *The New Wave*.

2 Contrast Truffaut's views here with Jean-Louis Comolli's polemic against Lelouch, 'Lelouch, ou la bonne conscience retrouvée', *Cahiers* 180, July 1966, translated as 'Polemic: Lelouch, or the Clear Conscience', Ch. 9 in this volume.

from Cahiers du cinéma : 1950s : ~~New Wave~~,

4 Jean-Luc Godard: *Les 400 Coups*

('La Photo du Mois', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 92, February 1959)

With *Les 400 Coups*, François Truffaut enters both modern cinema and the classrooms of our childhood. Bernanos's humiliated children.[1] Vitrac's children in power. Melville-Cocteau's *enfants terribles*. Vigo's children, Rossellini's children, in a word, Truffaut's children – a phrase which will become common usage as soon as the film comes out. Soon people will say Truffaut's children as they say Bengal Lancers, spoil-sports, Mafia chiefs, road-hogs, or again in a word, cinema-addicts. In *Les 400 Coups*, the director of *Les Mistons* will again have his camera, not up there with the men like Old Man Hawks, but down among the children. If a certain arrogance is implied in talking about 'up there' for the over-thirties, 'down there' should also be taken as implying pride in the under-sixteens: *Les 400 Coups* will be the proudest, stubbornest, most obstinate, in other words most free, film in the world. Morally speaking. Aesthetically, too. Henri Decae's Dyaliscope images will dazzle us like those of *Tarnished Angels*. The scenario will be fresh and airy like that of *Juvenile Passion*. The dialogue and gestures as caustic as those in *Baby Face Nelson*. The editing as delicate as that of *The Goddess*. Precocity will reveal its cloven hoof as in *The Left-handed Gun*. These titles do not spring at random from the keys of my electric typewriter. They come from François Truffaut's list of the ten best films of 1958. A charming and handsome family into which *Les 400 Coups* fits beautifully. To sum up, what shall I say? This: *Les 400 Coups* will be a film signed Frankness. Rapidity. Art. Novelty. Cinematograph. Originality. Impertinence. Seriousness. Tragedy. Renovation. Ubu-Roi. Fantasy. Ferocity. Affection. Universality. Tenderness.

Translated by Tom Milne

Note

1 'Bernanos's humiliated children': there are several 'humiliated children' in Bernanos's novels, e.g. the mutinous schoolgirl suicide of *Nouvelle histoire de*

the Cinema', translated in *Sight and Sound*, October 1953, reprinted in Richard Dyer MacCann, *Film: A Montage of Theories*, New York, E. P. Dutton, 1966; a different version has been translated as 'A Thesis on Neo-Realism' in David Overbey, *Springtime in Italy: A Reader on Neo-Realism*, London, Talisman Books, 1978.

Cahiers du Cinema
from The 1960s: New Wave, New Cinema, Reevaluating Hollywood.
ed. Jim Hillier.
Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 1986

4 Jean-Luc Godard: 'From Critic to Film-Maker': Godard in interview (extracts)[1]

('Entretien', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 138, December 1962)

Cahiers: Jean-Luc Godard, you came to the cinema by way of criticism. What do you owe to this background?

Godard: All of us at *Cahiers* thought of ourselves as future directors. Frequenting ciné-clubs and the Cinémathèque was already a way of thinking cinema and thinking about cinema. Writing was already a way of making films, for the difference between writing and directing is quantitative not qualitative. The only complete hundred-per-cent critic was André Bazin. The others – Sadoul, Balazs or Pasinetti[2] – are historians or sociologists, not critics.

As a critic, I thought of myself as a film-maker. Today I still think of myself as a critic, and in a sense I am, more than ever before. Instead of writing criticism, I make a film, but the critical dimension is subsumed. I think of myself as an essayist, producing essays in novel form or novels in essay form: only instead of writing, I film them. Were the cinema to disappear, I would simply accept the inevitable and turn to television; were television to disappear, I would revert to pencil and paper. For there is a clear continuity between all forms of expression. It's all one. The important thing is to approach it from the side which suits you best.

I also think there is no reason why one should not be a director without being a critic first. It so happens that for us things came about the way I described, but this isn't a rule. In any case, Rivette and Rohmer made 16 mm films. But if criticism was a first rung on the ladder, it was not simply a means. People say we made use of criticism. No. We were thinking cinema and at a certain moment we felt the need to extend that thought.

Criticism taught us to admire both Rouch and Eisenstein. From it we learned not to deny one aspect of the cinema in favour of another. From it we also learned to make films from a certain perspective, and to know that if something has already been done there is no point in

doing it again. A young author writing today knows that Molière and Shakespeare exist. We were the first directors to know that Griffith exists. Even Carné, Delluc and René Clair, when they made their first films, had no real critical or historical background. Even Renoir had very little; but then of course *he* had genius.

Cahiers: Only a fraction of the *nouvelle vague* have this sort of cultural equipment.

Godard: Yes, the *Cahiers* group, but for me this fraction is the whole thing. There's the *Cahiers* group (along with Uncle Astruc, Kast and – a little apart – Leenhardt), to which should be added what one might call the Left Bank group:[3] Resnais, Varda, Marker. And there is Demy. They had their own cultural background. But that's about the lot. The *Cahiers* group were the nucleus.

People say we can no longer write about our colleagues. Obviously it becomes difficult having a coffee with someone if that afternoon you have to write that he's made a silly film. But the thing that has always distinguished *Cahiers* from the rest is our principle of laudatory criticism: if you like a film, you write about it; if you don't like it, don't bother with tearing it to pieces. One need only stick to this principle. So, even if one makes films oneself, one can still say that so-and-so's film is brilliant – *Adieu Philippine*,[4] for instance. Personally I prefer to say so elsewhere than in *Cahiers*, because the important thing is to lead the profession round to a new way of thinking about the cinema. If I have the money, I prefer to pay for a page in a trade paper to talk about *Adieu Philippine*. There are people better qualified than me to talk about it in *Cahiers*.

Cahiers: Your critical attitude seems to contradict the idea of improvisation which is attached to your name.

Godard: I improvise, certainly, but with material which goes a long way back. Over the years you accumulate things and then suddenly you use them in what you're doing. My first shorts were prepared very carefully and shot very quickly. *A bout de souffle* began this way. I had written the first scene (Jean Seberg on the Champs-Elysées), and for the rest I had a pile of notes for each scene. I said to myself, this is terrible. I stopped everything. Then I thought: in a single day, if one knows how to go about it, one should be able to complete a dozen takes. Only instead of planning ahead, I shall invent at the last minute. If you know where you're going it ought to be possible. This isn't improvisation but last-minute focusing. Obviously, you must have an overall plan and stick to it; you can modify up to a point, but when shooting begins it should change as little as possible, otherwise it's catastrophic.

I read in *Sight and Sound* that I improvised Actors' Studio fashion, with actors to whom one says 'You are so-and-so; take it from there.' But Belmondo never invented his own dialogue. It was written. But the actors didn't learn it: the film was shot silent, and I cued the lines.

Cahiers: When you began the film, what did it mean to you?

Godard: Our first films were all *films de cinéphile* – the work of film enthusiasts. One can make use of what one has already seen in the cinema to make deliberate references. This was true of me in particular. I thought in terms of purely cinematographic attitudes. For some shots I referred to scenes I remembered from Preminger, Cukor, etc. And the character played by Jean Seberg was a continuation of her role in *Bonjour tristesse*. I could have taken the last shot of Preminger's film and started after dissolving to a title, 'Three Years Later'. This is much the same sort of thing as my taste for quotation, which I still retain. Why should we be reproached for it? People in life quote as they please, so we have the right to quote as we please. Therefore I show people quoting, merely making sure that they quote what pleases me. In the notes I make of anything that might be of use for a film, I will add a quote from Dostoevsky if I like it. Why not? If you want to say something, there is only one solution: say it.

Moreover, *A bout de souffle* was the sort of film where anything goes: that was what it was all about. Anything people did could be integrated in the film. As a matter of fact, this was my starting-point. I said to myself: we have already had Bresson, we have just had *Hiroshima*, a certain kind of cinema has just drawn to a close, maybe ended, so let's add the finishing touch, let's show that anything goes. What I wanted was to take a conventional story and remake, but differently, everything the cinema had done. I also wanted to give the feeling that the techniques of film-making had just been discovered or experienced for the first time. The iris-in showed that one could return to the cinema's sources; the dissolve appeared, just once, as though it had just been invented. If I used no other processes, this was in reaction against a certain kind of film-making; but it should not be made a rule. There are films in which they are necessary; and sometimes they should be used more frequently. There is a story about Decoin[5] going to see his editor at Billancourt[6] and saying: 'I have just seen *A bout de souffle*; from now on, continuity shots are out.'

[. . .]

As I make low-budget films, I can ask the producer for a five-week schedule, knowing there will be two weeks of actual shooting. *Vivre sa vie* took four weeks, but shooting stopped during the whole second week. The big difficulty is that I need people who can be at my disposal the whole time. Sometimes they have to wait a whole day before I can tell them what I want them to do. I have to ask them not to leave the location in case we start shooting again. Of course they don't like it. That's why I always try to see that people who work with me are well paid. Actors don't like it for a different reason: an actor likes to feel he's in control of his character, even if it isn't true, and with me they rarely do. The terrible thing is that in the cinema it is so difficult to do what a painter does quite naturally: he stops, steps back, gets discouraged, starts again, changes something. He can please himself.

But this method is not valid for everyone. There are two main groups of directors. On one side, with Eisenstein and Hitchcock, are those who prepare their films as fully as possible. They know what they want, it's all in their heads, and they put it down on paper. The shooting is merely practical application – constructing something as similar as possible to what was imagined. Resnais is one of them; so is Demy. The others, people like Rouch, don't know exactly what they are going to do, and search for it. The film is the search. They know they are going to arrive somewhere – and they have the means to do it – but where exactly? The first make circular films; the others, films in a straight line. Renoir is one of the few who do both at the same time, and this is his charm.

Rossellini is something else again. He alone has an exact vision of the totality of things. So he films them in the only way possible. Nobody else can film one of Rossellini's scenarios – one would have to ask questions which he himself never asks. His vision of the world is so exact that his way of seeing detail, formal or otherwise, is too. With him, a shot is beautiful because it is right; with most others, a shot becomes right because it is beautiful. They try to construct something wonderful, and if in fact it becomes so, one can see that there were reasons for doing it. Rossellini does something he had a reason for doing in the first place. It's beautiful because it is.

Beauty – the splendour of truth – has two poles. There are directors who seek the truth, which, if they find it, will necessarily be beautiful; others seek beauty, which, if they find it, will also be true. One finds these two poles in documentary and fiction. Some directors start from documentary and create fiction – like Flaherty, who eventually made very carefully constructed films. Others start from fiction and create documentary: Eisenstein, starting in montage, ended by making *Que Viva Mexico!*

The cinema is the only art which, as Cocteau says (in *Orphée*, I believe), 'films death at work'. Whoever one films is growing older and will die. So one is filming a moment of death at work. Painting is static: the cinema is interesting because it seizes life and the mortal side of life.

Cahiers: From which pole do you start?

Godard: From documentary, I think, in order to give it the truth of fiction. That is why I have always worked with good professional actors. Without them, my films would not be as good.

I am also interested in the theatrical aspect. Already in *Le Petit soldat*, where I was trying to discover the concrete, I noticed that the closer I came to the concrete, the closer I came to the theatre. *Vivre sa vie* is very concrete, and at the same time very theatrical. I would like to film a play by Sacha Guitry; I'd like to film *Six Characters in Search of an Author* to show through cinema what theatre is. By being realistic one discovers the theatre, and by being theatrical. . . . These are the boxes of *Le Carrosse d'or*: behind the theatre there is life, and behind life, the theatre.

I started from the imaginary and discovered reality; but behind reality, there is again imagination.

Cinema, Truffaut said, is spectacle – Méliès – and research – Lumière. If I analyse myself today, I see that I have always wanted, basically, to do research in the form of a spectacle. The documentary side is: a man in a particular situation. The spectacle comes when one makes this man a gangster or a secret agent. In *Une Femme est une femme* the spectacle comes from the fact that the woman is an actress; in *Vivre sa vie*, a prostitute.

Producers say 'Godard talks about anything he pleases, Joyce, metaphysics or painting, but he always has his commercial side.' I don't feel this at all: I see not two things, but one.

[. . .]

The *nouvelle vague*, in fact, may be defined in part by this new relationship between fiction and reality, as well as through nostalgic regret for a cinema which no longer exists. When we were at last able to make films, we could no longer make the kind of films which had made us want to make films. The dream of the *nouvelle vague* – which will never come about – is to make *Spartacus* in Hollywood on a ten million dollar budget. It doesn't bother me having to make small, inexpensive films, but people like Demy don't like it a bit.

Everyone has always thought the *nouvelle vague* stood for small budgets against big ones, but it isn't so: simply for good films of any kind against bad ones. But small budgets proved to be the only way we could make films. Certainly some films are all the better for being made cheaply; but then think of the films that are all the better because money has been spent on them.

Cahiers: Suppose you had been asked to make *Vivre sa vie* on a hundred million franc budget?

Godard: I would never have accepted. What good would it have done the film? The only advantage would have been that I could have paid people more for working for me. In the same way, I refuse to make a film for a hundred million when I would need four hundred. People are beginning to offer me expensive films: 'Don't waste your time on those trifles. Come and adapt this book, make a real film, with so-and-so as star. We'll give you three hundred million.' Trouble is, it would take four hundred.

Certainly it's pleasant working American super-production style, shooting one set-up per day – especially as this is precisely how I work anyway. Like me, they take time off to think, only there it's done in the front office. So many lights and armchairs for stars have to be moved when setting up a scene that the director has nothing else to do but think during the removals. But there they have other problems: as soon as a film costs three or four hundred million, it becomes a producer's film, and he won't give you your head. Even if the film is made knowing it will lose money (as Bronston made *El Cid* and *55 Days at Peking* with

money blocked in Spain), the producer watches you, because he doesn't want to lose his money any old how.

Actually, it is only in France that the producer recognizes – in principle, at least – the idea of an *auteur*. (Hitchcock is an exception: when other directors were finally getting their names in lights, *he* got a picture of himself.) Even the best Italian producers consider the director to be an employee. The difference is that the Italian industry is pretty worthless, whereas the Americans are pretty good – less so, perhaps, since the disappearance of the studio system, but until then they were the best in the world. American scriptwriters, too, simply dwarf even the better French writers. Ben Hecht is the best scriptwriter I have ever seen. In his book *The Producer*, it is extraordinary to see how Richard Brooks manages to construct a very fine, coherent script based on the Red Sea story which had been suggested to him. The Americans, who are much more stupid when it comes to analysis, instinctively bring off very complex scripts. They also have a gift for the kind of simplicity which brings depth – in a little Western like *Ride the High Country*, for instance. If one tries to do something like that in France, one looks like an intellectual.

The Americans are real and natural. But this attitude means something over there. We in France must find something that means something – find the French attitude as they have found the American attitude. To do so, one must begin by talking about things one knows. We have been accused of talking about certain subjects only, but we talk about things we know, looking for something which reflects us. Before us, the only person who really tried to see France was Jacques Becker, and he did so by filming fashion houses and gangsters. The others never filmed reality. All those reproaches aimed at us should have been directed against them, because their cinema was completely unreal. They were completely cut off: the cinema was one thing, life another. They didn't live their cinema. I once saw Delannoy[7] going into the Billancourt studios, briefcase in hand: you would have sworn he was going into an insurance office.

Cahiers: So we come back to the idea of departmentalizing.

Godard: France is made up of departments. But in any means of expression everything is connected and all means of expression are connected. And life itself is one of them. For me, making films and not making films are not two different ways of life. Filming should be a part of living, something normal and natural. Making films hasn't changed my life very much, because I made them before by writing criticism, and if I had to return to criticism, it would be a way of going on making films. It is true that things are different depending on whether you do or do not like preparing your films. If you need to prepare, then you have to prepare very carefully, and the danger is that the cinema may become detached and exclusive.

The only interesting film Clouzot has made is one in which he was

seeking, improvising, experimenting, one in which he lived something: *Le Mystère Picasso*. Clément and the rest never live their cinema. It is a separate compartment, itself divided into compartments.

In France, as I have already said, one can't mix genres. In America, a thriller can also be political and include gags. Because it is American, this is acceptable here at a pinch, but try the same thing with things French, and they howl. This is why a French thriller never tells you anything about France. Of course this mental departmentalizing also corresponds to a departmentalization of social truths.

One mustn't mix the genres, but one mustn't mix people either. They must be kept separate. It's very difficult for someone who wants to mix things and different social milieux.

The *nouvelle vague* was honest in that it did well what it knew instead of doing badly what it didn't know or mixing up everything it knew. Talk about the workers? I would be glad to, but I don't know them well enough. I would love to film Vailland's *325,000 francs*, but it's a difficult subject and I'd be afraid to. What are they waiting for, the people who *do* know? The first time I heard a workman speak in the cinema was in *Chronique d'un été*. Rouch apart, none of the people who have done films about workers have had any talent. Naturally their workmen were phoney.

Nowadays, it is true, there are fewer complaints, because people have realized that we are beginning to deal with other things besides wild parties. Only Vadim has done nothing else, and nobody reproaches him for it. Vadim is the dregs. He has betrayed everything he could betray, himself included. It's the betrayal of the hireling. Today, for the powers-that-be, he is perfectly integrated morally and economically, and that is why people like him. He has the support of the Government because he is very right-thinking: in the area of eroticism and family entertainment he has no equal. The public loves it: Vadim is easy to take. And this is why he is inexcusable: he gives people the impression that they are getting Shakespeare when he offers them *Confidential* and *True Romance*. They say, 'You mean that's Shakespeare? But it's wonderful – why weren't we told before?'

I don't believe one can know one is doing something stupid or harmful and still go on doing it. Vadim probably isn't aware of what he is doing, and thinks he is making good films. At the beginning, when he was spontaneous and sincere, he wasn't aware either: he just happened to be there at the right moment. The fact that he was there at the right moment, when everyone else was lagging behind, gave the impression that he was out in front. Since then he has been marking time, while everyone else came up to date. So now he is lagging. Being also very resourceful by nature, he followed the track beaten by those directors who were ambitious and up-and-coming during the Occupation; he has taken their place exactly – and they were already beginning to date

twenty years ago. It all happened like the ministerial changes under the Fourth Republic. He carried on the craft.

Having a craft is something which has always been important in France. Before the war, the film director was not comparable to a musician or a writer, but to a carpenter, a craftsman. It so happened that among the craftsmen there were artists like Renoir and Ophuls. Today the director is considered as an artist, but most of them are still craftsmen. They work in the cinema as one does in a skilled trade. Craftsmanship does exist, but not as they see it. Carné is a craftsman, and his craft makes him make bad films. To begin with, when he was creating his craft, he made brilliant films: now he creates no longer. Today Chabrol has more craft than Carné, and his craft serves for exploration. It is a worthy craft.

Cahiers: Does the *nouvelle vague* – in criticism and in film-making – have in common this will to explore?

Godard: We have many things in common. Of course I am different from Rivette, Rohmer or Truffaut, but in general we share the same ideas about the cinema, we like more or less the same novels, paintings and films. We have more things in common than not, and the differences are big about small things, small about big things. Even if they weren't, the fact that we were all critics accustomed us to seeing affinities rather than differences.

We don't all make the same films, of course, but the more so-called 'normal' films I see, the more I am struck by the difference between them and our own. It must be a big difference, because I usually tend to see the affinities between things. Before the war, there was a difference between, for instance, Duvivier's *La Belle équipe* and Renoir's *La Bête humaine*, but only one of quality. Whereas now, there is a real difference in kind between our films and those of Verneuil, Delannoy, Duvivier or Carné.

Much the same is true of criticism: *Cahiers* has kept a style of its own, but this hasn't prevented it from going downhill. Why? Whose fault is it? I think it is due chiefly to the fact that there is no longer any position to defend. There used always to be something to say. Now that everyone is agreed, there isn't so much to say. The thing that made *Cahiers* was its position in the front line of battle.

There were two kinds of values: true and false. *Cahiers* came along saying that the true were false and the false were true. Today there is neither true nor false, and everything has become much more difficult. The *Cahiers* critics were commandos. Today they are an army in peacetime, going out on manoeuvres from time to time. I think this is a passing phase. For the moment, as with all armies in peacetime, *Cahiers* is divided into clans, but this happens with all critics, particularly young ones. It has reached the same stage as Protestantism did when it divided an[illegible] edibl[illegible] mbe[illegible] sect[illegible] d ch[illegible]. Directors' names are

bandied about because everyone has his own favourite and is necessarily obliged to detest everyone else's.

Other things baffle me too. *Cahiers* is enormously influential abroad. But – and everyone agrees about this – when one goes abroad one meets people who say, 'Do you really think Freda[8] is important?' It was difficult enough getting them to see that people like Ray and Aldrich had genius, but when they find interviews with directors like Ulmer, they give up. I am for the *politique des auteurs*, but not just anybody. Opening the door to absolutely everyone is very dangerous. Inflation threatens.

The important thing is not to *have* to discover someone. Leave the smart game of finding new names to *L'Express*.[9] The important thing is to know how to distinguish between the talented and the untalented, and if possible to define the talent, to analyse it. There are very few who try.

Of course, everything has become very difficult for critics now, and we also had many of the same faults *Cahiers* now suffers from. But at least we have in common that we are searching: those who do not seek will not long delude, for things always become clear in the end.

Translated by Tom Milne

Notes

1 Extracts only are reprinted here: the whole interview is translated in *Godard on Godard*, pp. 171–96.

2 Sadoul, Balazs, Pasinetti: film historians, critics and theorists. Georges Sadoul, French, 1904–1962; Béla Balazs, Hungarian, 1884–1949; Francesco Pasinetti, Italian, 1911–1941.

3 'The Left Bank group': So-called not only because they lived on the Left Bank in Paris, but because their cultural background (literature, politics, and the plastic arts) was very different from that of the film-oriented *Cahiers du Cinéma* group, comprising Godard, Truffaut, Chabrol, Rivette, Rohmer, and Doniol-Valcroze. (Translator's note.)

4 *Adieu Philippine* (1963), first feature by Jacques Rozier.

5 The veteran director Henri Decoin, whose films – e.g., *Les Inconnus dans la maison* (with Raimu, 1942), *La Vérité sur Bébé Donge* (with Gabin, 1951) – are competently made but reveal no individual personality. (Translator's note.)

6 Billancourt, French film studios, on the outskirts of Paris.

7 Jean Delannoy, veteran French film director, b. 1908, directing features since the mid-1930s; Delannoy very much represented the 'cinéma de papa' and was accordingly much attacked by *Cahiers* in the 1950s and early 1960s.

8 Riccardo Freda, an Italian director who brought an excellent sense of visual style to what were essentially exploitation pictures – horror films, muscle-man epics, swashbuckling adventures. As in the case of Edgar Ulmer, the enthusiasts from *Cahiers du Cinéma* tended to overpraise Freda's talent – unless misled by his habit of signing his pictures with an English pseudonym into writing him off completely, as they did with his delightfully outlandish horror film, *L'Orribile Segreto del Dottor Hichcock* (1962). (Translator's note.)

9 *L'Express*, French liberal weekly news magazine, modelled on *Time* and *Newsweek*.

from French Film : Texts + Contexts.
first edition.
eds. Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau
London + NY: Routledge, 1990.
pp. 217-229

16. The fall of the gods: Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Mépris* (1963)

JACQUES AUMONT

Thirty-three is, quite literally, a crucial age for any western male, the age of crucifixions and triumphs. The 33-year-old Jean-Luc Godard who made *Le Mépris* was no beginner since he had already directed five features, five shorts, and three episodes for 'omnibus' films, and long since put behind him the period of his masterly first attempts. But in the course of a career that had consisted solely of climaxes, each more powerful than the last, 1963 was the year in which he made not only *Les Carabiniers*, his most resounding flop and most provocative movie, but also *Le Mépris*, the film that came closest to the prevailing models of the time, from both an aesthetic and an industrial point of view.

Let me immediately remove any possible ambiguity: although *Le Mépris* was a more 'normal' production than Godard's previous films (big budget, international co-production, cast of stars) it is above all, in retrospect, the prototype of a configuration that often recurred subsequently in his career — the wholesale destruction of an apparently traditional screenplay, the misuse (or abuse, or non-use) of stars, a stylistic impertinence. This is a configuration that can be found, to varying degrees, in *Pierrot le fou*/Belmondo, *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*/Dutronc/Baye, and *Détective*/Halliday. It has become a commonplace to say, but it is nonetheless true, that Godard was extraordinarily successful in integrating himself into the film industry, but in a totally idiosyncratic manner (involving, very early on, the crediting of his own name as filmmaker *on an equal footing* with any other name or body).

Itself a big-budget movie, *Le Mépris* can thus be regarded — and today should be regarded — as a commentary, at once ironic and nostalgic, on the big-budget movie. Of all the French films made in 1963, it was one of the most costly,[1] both thanks to and because of Bardot's presence: 'It was the only time I had the feeling I was going to be able to make a big film with a big budget. In fact it was a small budget for the film, as all the money went to Brigitte Bardot, Fritz Lang and Jack Palance' (Godard 1980, 73). But of all 'Bardot's' films it was the one which made the least money, along with Louis Malle's *Vie privée*. It is impossible not to be reminded, while making all due allowances, of another 1963 movie, Joseph Mankiewicz's *Cleopatra*, a bottomless pit that swallowed up so many millions of dollars it hastened the demise of the studio system. Godard was certainly not responsible for any such disaster, and one of the admirable qualities of *Le Mépris* is that, first, it forewarns us of that demise, and then poeticizes, *ante factum*, its infinite sadness. If one excepts the first two shots in the film (the sequence against which the credits are spoken, and the celebrated shots of the naked Bardot, which were imposed by the

history. That concern was shared by the whole generation of the New Wave, and more particularly the *Cahiers* group, and centred on the important notion that filmmaking was but an extension of the critic's or aesthetician's activity, and that each individual film would therefore be a re-reading, a re-writing, of the entire history of the cinema (a very particular kind of history, of course, polarized by strongly voiced likes and dislikes). In that respect, Godard was very typical of his generation, and he does not really go much further than, on occasion, Truffaut, who prided himself on *Jules et Jim's* 40-odd quotations and acts of homage. Godard was simply more systematic, and above all more persistent, gradually elaborating, from film to film, something that came to be seen by the end of the 1960s as an aesthetics of the fragment (people at the time were less interested in the actual insistence of Godard's use of quotation than in the almost detachable nature of the quotations themselves and, correlatively, in his masterly use of collage and the cut-up technique).

It was precisely Godard's persistence and systematic obstinacy that lent him an affinity, not found in any other New Wave director (with the possible exception of Rivette, but on a completely different register), with what can only be termed the literary 'avant-gardes' of the 1950s and 1960s. The use of the second degree, self-reflexivity, specularity and other 'defamiliarizing' techniques was characteristic of what came to be known as the *Nouveau Roman* group, which was just as loosely structured as the New Wave. Much sarcasm was directed at such 'novelties' (they were even accused of conforming too closely to the 'modernizing' ideology and phraseology of the Gaullist Fifth Republic). The sarcasm turned to scorn when, taking the practical premises of Butor's *La Modification*, Ollier's *La Mise-en-scène* and Robbe-Grillet's *Les Gommes* to their logical conclusion, Barthes and the Tel Quel group erected them into a theory. To be quite accurate, this intellectual terrain was not, directly or at first hand, that of Godard himself (who was more familiar with such precursors of the *Nouveau Roman* as Joyce, Faulkner and Céline). All I am attempting to do here is, if you like, to point to a cultural coincidence. But it is well known that as far as culture goes no coincidence is the fruit of pure chance: in this particular case, Godard (and some members of the New Wave), the *Nouveau Roman* (and those sometimes linked with it like Le Clézio, whom Godard met in 1966)[6] and, more generally, a large section of the French intelligentsia of the 1960s did at least share one basic notion: that any work worthy of the name must contain its own keys. Their complicity was not only formal, but ideological: modernity, this 'novelty' so often foolishly derided and violently denigrated, also resides in a rejection of naïvety, a wish to show that one knows what one is doing (a wish which, towards the end of the decade, and more particularly in Godard's case, naturally took on a directly political form).

Thus, to return to *Le Mépris*, it contains other references, which are given a varying degree of prominence, and through each of which the film seems to be looking back on itself. The painted eyes of the statues supposedly filmed by Lang call to mind other painted eyes, those of Cocteau, a poet whom

Godard admired, and another first-person filmmaker, who constantly explored and pointed up the powers of the cinema. The way Godard films the Villa Malaparte in Capri, and the very idea of using its rectilinear architecture, outdo Antonioni at his own game — which is of some relevance in a film which Godard wanted to be 'a successful Antonioni, in other words filmed by Hawks'. In short, *Le Mépris* is a movie in which the filmmaker's 'authorial' self-awareness is never far below the surface and a deliberate reflexivity constantly asserts itself.

That reflexivity was something that 'art' films of the 1960s seized upon with relish, particularly through the specific stylistic figure — also found in *Le Mépris* — of the 'film within the film'. By about the middle of the decade, any movie with ambitions would systematically, but not always very subtly, exhibit the whole paraphernalia of its own shooting, e.g. *Persona*, and *La Chinoise*, or at least refer to itself as a film, for instance *L'Amour fou*, and *Belle de jour*. The presence of the film equipment, technicians and actors in *Le Mépris* remains, as in its Hollywoodian predecessors, unobtrusively confined to the diegesis, and thus does not possess the disruptive impact of the appearance of the camera and clapperboard in *La Chinoise*. Even so, the existence of the film within the film does tend to have an effect of disruption, of tearing the fabric of the narrative. In this respect the credit-title sequence of *Le Mépris* works to perfection, as it combines the principal modes of 'distancing' and of interpellation of the spectator (voice-over, film equipment shown on the screen, the camera pointing at 'us') with what is already the beginning of a narrative: in that first shot of the film, Georgia Moll — or should she already be referred to as Francesca Vanini — is tracked by the camera as she walks down a studio-built street in Cinecittà which, in the third shot, she walks up in the opposite direction, now accompanied by Paul Javal/Piccoli as well as the camera (on the same rails).

This credit-title sequence is remarkably striking, as well as being famous — at least in France, where it was long used for the credits of a now defunct television programme on the cinema. It is also, as Jean-Louis Leutrat has shown (1986, 68), totally representative of a film in which 'the characters are affected' by a certain 'indecision'. I myself would even go so far as to contend that not only the characters but the whole story and the whole diegesis are affected by that indecision. What is basically at issue here is Godard's conception of the cinema, which attempts to combine and to embrace both the classical heritage (the conception of the open, transparent window) and something which can now clearly be seen to be modernity (distancing, the play on shifters). It is of course no coincidence that Godard here quotes from André Bazin, the champion of Neo-Realism and Rossellini, and defender of the kind of cinema which respects 'the ambiguity inherent in reality'. But the Bazin quotation is itself not unambiguous, first because it comes at the precise moment when the camera lens (the monstrously large CinemaScope lens) tilts down towards us, and we cannot clearly see, at that point, what 'replaces our look', unless it is the look at another look that is looking at us, and secondly

'moderate', much more 'natural' (it is in *Une Femme est une femme*, *Pierrot le fou*, *Made in USA* and other films Godard shot in Eastmancolor that violent colours are to be found in abundance, and increasingly so as his taste for flat-tints became more pronounced — viz *La Chinoise*). Colour is not absent from *Le Mépris*, but, put simply, it could be said that it seems to have been used not as a purely plastic material, but almost always for its emotional or symbolic impact. The strongest impression left by the shots of the trees, rocks and sea around Capri is one of light — the dazzling, relentless light of the Midi (of 'midi le juste', as Paul Valéry puts it in *Le Cimetière marin*; and, as in that poem, what the light accompanies and signifies is the presentation of a tragic world under the constant gaze of the gods). In the other parts of the film, it is the colour red that plays the most important role: it is initially associated with contempt, through the red Alfa-Romeo, because it is when she is forced to get into that car that Camille first feels contempt for Paul, but also because its facile and vulgar phallic symbolism embodies the contemptuous attitude the film shows towards the producer, himself a vulgar and macho character. The colour red seeps from the car into other scenes, and it is, for instance, when she rolls up and unrolls her red bath towel, in the apartment scene, that Camille comes to realize her mounting contempt for Paul. (The end of the film, of course, sees the return of the most basic signification of red — blood and death.) There is unfortunately no space here to discuss the blue stains on the statues (a pre-echo of Belmondo's face at the end of *Pierrot le fou*), or the saffron-yellow of Camille's and Francesca's bathrobes in the last scene in the villa.

Side by side with this work on colour, the other main plastic constituent, the frame, is similarly employed in two different ways — as a *cadre-fenêtre* (the frame as a window on the world) and as a *cadre-limite* (everything composed within the frame). Examples of the first mode include the film's (few) landscapes (the sea, the countryside around Rome), the extraordinarily flexible way the camera explores the space of the apartment, and the virtuosity of the tracking shots. But, in contrast to that, there are elements which obstruct the straightforward and natural functioning of the 'window' and tend, for example, towards the 'compositional', towards the frame as a plastic boundary. First of all there is the format of the picture itself, CinemaScope, which as everyone knows — whatever Bazin may have thought of it, and despite the rather naïve notion that more surface means more reality — is the most unrealistic format there is. As Fritz Lang rightly says to Paul Javal, it is a format that is no good for anything except, at a pinch, filming snakes and funerals (a quip which, oddly enough, cites one of the examples — the snake — given by Eisenstein in his argument in favour of changing the format from shot to shot). So Godard repeatedly uses CinemaScope here in such a way that it becomes a caricature of itself, as in the celebrated scene around the lamp, or, more obviously, in the scenes 'from *The Odyssey*' (I am thinking in particular of the shot where two statues are banished to the far left and right of the screen). But Godard exploits the frame in other ways as well. Mention must at least be made, because it recurs more than once, of the way he films viewing theatres from the proscenium, so as to show the spectators looking (or not looking) towards the screen, in a reversal of the 'normal' point of view — a 'defamiliarizing' mode of filming, and one of the manifestations of a Griffith-like archaism in Godard, where excessive transparency destroys transparency.

My last few remarks need enlarging upon, but there is no space to do so here. What I have tried to suggest is that there may be an extension, in the actual way the visible material is exploited, of the fundamental stylistic characteristic of *Le Mépris*, which is duplicity. Something finally should be said about one of the essential features of the film — the fact that it is an adaptation. In this respect as in many others, the film occupies a special position in Godard's *oeuvre*, since it is the only one of all his 'adaptations' where the plot, the characters, the situations and even some dialogue from the original novel have been retained (Godard's casual approach to the 'adaptation' of literary works is an integral part of his brand image as an iconoclast). It is in fact the only one of his films where the novel is treated as it would have been by a Hollywood director. It is consequently of some interest that the story of the film within the film itself centres almost exclusively on problems of adaptation (of *The Odyssey*): Paul Javal is hired by Prokosch to rework that adaptation, and, more importantly, most of the discussions between Lang, Prokosch and Javal are about the meaning that should be given to a modern reading of *The Odyssey*. Lang's professional and moral principles prevent him from seeing it as the story of a 'modern neurotic', while Javal, partly out of eagerness to please and partly from sincerity, ends up believing not only that this is a possible interpretation, but that he is himself a kind of unhappy Ulysses, despised by the impenetrable Penelope/Camille. But the most remarkable thing is that *Le Mépris* does not come down in favour of either of these two points of view (the third, held by the producer Prokosch, is discounted); it maintains both of them. It is as if the film accepted, pragmatically, the possibility of two or more interpretations not only of Homer's work, but of the cultural heritage in general, depending on the interpretative approach — and always supposing that it is coherent. Lang distances himself (through quotations from both Dante and Hölderlin) from any 'archaeologizing' approach to the story of Ulysses, because for him the gods are dead; but there is nothing to prevent Javal from projecting himself into a dramatic situation which, with a few minor adjustments, seems tailor-made for him — perhaps because, as Godard says, he is 'an anguished dreamer who is searching for an identity, without wishing to admit as much' (1985, 242).

The Odyssey is an epic, but also a tragedy, in the sense that it shows how the fate of mankind is sealed in advance by superior forces. *Le Mépris*, too, is a tragedy, even if the forces that grip Camille and Paul are not divine, but all too human (or socio-psychological, to use the terminology of the period). In the movement from one of these tragedies to the other, the task of the filmmaker is

one of rewriting — in a way that respects the original, instead of a massacre *à la* Prokosch. It is a simple, ambitious task, which must get across the notion that even if our culture is nothing but a gigantic and interminable process of rewriting we shall always have to go back to our sources — that even after their twilight, we must still speak of the gods.

Translated from the French by Peter Graham

NOTES

1. About 500 million francs. I obtained this information from the best article so far published on *Le Mépris*, by Michel Marie (1986).
2. A popular Italian genre of the 1950s and 1960s, consisting of costume epics set in Antiquity (eds).
3. Even Leonard Maltin noticed: 'Producer Joseph E. Levine didn't seem to understand that Godard, who appears here as Lang's assistant, held *him* in contempt, making the film a highly amusing "in" joke' (1987, 186) — though to me the joke seems acerbic rather than funny. 'Before May 1968, Godard used to send telegrams addressed to "Mussolini Ponti" and "King Kong Levine" ' (Piccoli 1970, 91).
4. See, for example, his letters to such an understanding and agreeable producer as Pierre Braunberger, which, although friendly in tone, show Godard maintaining a certain directorial aloofness (Braunberger 1987, 180-189).
5. Paul's celebrated hat, too, comes straight out of *Le Doulos* (J.-P. Melville, 1962), in which Piccoli got his first really major film part; Godard was friends with Melville at the time — 'doulos' is a slang word for 'hat'.
6. *L'Express*, 9 May 1966 (reproduced in Godard 1985, 286-291).
7. Herbert T. Kalmus was a pioneer in colour technology and the founder of the Technicolor Company. Here, however, 'Kalmus' refers principally to Nathalie Kalmus (his former wife), a formidable character most dreaded by directors of photography, who, as 'technical advisor for color', made her mark on *all* Technicolour films from the 1930s to the 1950s.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aumont, Jacques (1986) 'Godard peintre', *Revue belge du cinéma*, 16, 41-46.

Braunberger, Pierre (1987) *Cinémamémoire*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Centre National de la Cinématographie.

Eisenstein, Sergei (1930) 'Le Carré dynamique', French trans. *Au-delà des étoiles*, Paris, UGE, 1974, 209-223.

Faux, Anne-Marie (1986) 'Quelque chose à entendre et à regarder', *Revue belge du cinéma*, 16.

Godard, Jean-Luc (1980) *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*, Paris, Albatros.

Godard, Jean-Luc (1985) *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, Paris, Editions de l'Etoile, 241-248.

Leutrat, Jean-Louis (1986) 'Il était trois fois', *Revue belge du cinéma*, 16.

Maltin, Leonard (1987) *TV Movies and Video Guide*, New York, New American Library.

Marie, Michel (1986) 'Un monde qui s'accorde à nos désirs', *Revue belge du cinéma*, 16.

Piccoli, Michel (1970) 'Rencontre avec Michel Piccoli', *Cinéma 70*, 147.

For additional Godard bibliography, see Chapter 15, on *A bout de souffle*.

APPENDIX

Jean-Luc Godard (1930—): filmography

See Chapter 15, on *A bout de souffle*, for full filmography.

Films cited in the text

L'Amour fou, Jacques Rivette (1968)
The Bad and the Beautiful, Vincente Minnelli (1952)
The Barefoot Contessa, Joseph Mankiewicz (1954)
Belle de jour, Luis Buñuel (1967)
Les Carabiniers (*The Soldiers* [UK version]; *The Riflemen* [USA version], Jean-Luc Godard (1963)
La Chinoise, Jean-Luc Godard (1967)
Détective (*Detective*), Jean-Luc Godard (1985)
Le Doulos (*Doulos the Finger Man*), Jean-Pierre Melville (1962)
Fahrenheit 451, François Truffaut (1966)
Une Femme est une femme (*A Woman Is a Woman*), Jean-Luc Godard (1961)
Jules et Jim (*Jules and Jim*), François Truffaut (1961)
Made in USA, Jean-Luc Godard (1966)
Le Mépris (*Contempt*), Jean-Luc Godard (1963)
La Nuit américaine (*Day for Night*), François Truffaut (1973)
8 1/2 (*Otto e Mezzo*), Frederico Fellini (1963)
Persona, Ingmar Bergman (1966)
Pierrot le fou, Jean-Luc Godard (1965)
The Quiet American, Joseph Mankiewicz (1957)
Sauve qui peut (la vie) (*Slow Motion* [UK]; *Every Man for Himself* [USA]), Jean-Luc Godard (1980)
Shane, George Stevens (1953)
Soigne ta droite, Jean-Luc Godard (1987)
Viaggio in Italia (*Voyage to Italy* [UK]; *Strangers*[USA]), Roberto Rossellini (1953)
Vie privée (*A Very Private Affair*), Louis Malle (1962)
Vivre sa vie (*It's My Life* [UK]; *My Life to Live* [USA]), Jean-Luc Godard (1962)
Weekend (*WeekEnd*), Jean-Luc Godard (1968)

From an artistic point of view, the talkie offers the writer quite different and, in some cases, marvelously original resources. . . . For the first time, dramatic authors will be able to achieve works which neither Molière, nor Racine, nor Shakespeare had the means even to attempt.

Marcel Pagnol, 1930

The talking picture will survive only if the formula suitable to it is found, only if it can break loose from the influence of the theater and fiction, only if people make of it something other than an *art of imitation*.

René Clair, 1930

We count ourselves among those who are ashamed that the cinema—which, as a young art and a modern means of expression, is best suited to represent our era—is satisfied with fairy tales, banal anecdotes, and hackneyed vaudevilles, to the exclusion of subjects which would genuinely, lastingly, expand and resonate in our hearts and minds. . . . Individual conflicts; dramas of alcohol, passion, or friendship [of course]; but *phenomena of a collective order*, never!

Marcel Carné, 1932

In the present period of transition—the period of the sound film and talkie—we cannot envision the possible organization—on the technical level, of course—of an undertaking that would correspond to what had been operating—whether good or bad, at least *it was operating*—in the period of the silent film: the so-called avant-garde cinema.

Léon Moussinac, 1933

French Film Theory and Criticism: 1907-1939. vol. 2
Ed. Richard Abel
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

The Transition to Sound

THE PUBLIC forum for French writing on the cinema underwent a significant change in the early 1930s, a change that differed a good deal from those that had marked previous periods. Here the sound film "revolution," which altered the material bases (economic, technological) of film production and exhibition produced a major shift of ground. As a spectacle, just as it had before the Great War, the French cinema became more closely aligned with the theater and music hall or cabaret—for instance, writers, performers, and other personnel increasingly crossed back and forth between stage and studio; and cinema programs now often included stage performances by popular vaudeville entertainers.[1] As an industry, it became even more subject to financial crises, as the Depresssion began to take its toll, so that, by 1934, some of the largest French film production companies—Pathé-Natan, Gaumont-Franco-Film-Aubert (GFFA), Jacques Haik, Adolphe Osso—either had collapsed into, or were close to, bankruptcy.[2] Independent film production and distribution were cut back sharply, which forced certain formerly prominent voices and discourses into near silence and led to what Léon Moussinac and others called "the death of the avant-garde." Moreover, the rise of fascism in Western Europe, together with a growing interest in communism or Marxism, inspired by the apparent model provided by the Soviet Union, produced a further polarizing shift in the political situation, which increasingly divided French writers into ideological camps. Within the context of these changes, no one particular voice or discourse on the cinema emerged to dominate the period—although the debate over "canned theater" between René Clair and Marcel Pagnol perhaps came closest. Instead, more often than not, French film theory and criticism now hastened to catch up with rather than direct actual film practice.

THE PUBLIC FORUM

The popular and specialized press continued to provide the primary forum for discussion about the cinema, but that forum depended more heavily than before on the film industry and its alliances with the newspaper consortia. The rapid development and diffusion of the sound film led to even greater coverage of the cinema in the daily and weekly French press, although most offered little more than rewritten publicity releases and capsule reviews.[3] Relatively few changes occurred, however, among the writ-

ers involved in producing that coverage. Emile Vuillermoz, René Jeanne, Jean Chataigner, Alexandre Arnoux, and J.L. Croze, for instance, all retained their film reviewing positions, respectively, at *Le Temps*, *Le Petit Journal*, *Le Journal*, *L'Intransigeant*, and *Le Petit Parisien* and *Comoedia*. One important exception came in the transformation of *Paris-Soir*, which Jean Prouvost took over in 1931 (he already controlled *Paris-Midi*) and soon returned to a center-left political position. Within just a couple of years, the circulation of *Paris-Soir* had reached and surpassed that of *Le Petit Parisien* (1.5 million); and its film reviewers, Paul Reboux (who also wrote for *Paris-Midi*) and Pierre Wolff, became probably the most influential critics in France. Another exception came in the growing number of right-wing daily papers—which now included *Le Matin*, *Le Figaro* (which absorbed *L'Ami du peuple* in 1933), and *Le Jour* (launched by Léon Bailby in late 1933)—and weekly magazines as well as their increasing circulation. Joining the ranks of *Action française* (whose literary editorship young Robert Brasillach took over in 1932) and *Candide* were Horace de Carbuccia's *Gringoire* (launched in 1928), Pierre Gaxotte's *Je suis partout* (first published by Arthème Fayard in 1930, and edited by Lucien Rebatet), and Librairie Plon's *1933*.[4] The political right now began to take on a more overtly fascist cast and to assert and even extend its influence by means of this sudden interest in the cinema, principally through François Vinneuil's review columns in *Action française* and *Je suis partout* as well as through Jean Fayard's reviews in *Candide*, Georges Champeaux's in *Gringoire*, René Bizet's in *Le Jour*, and Maurice Bardèche's in *1933*.[5] The left, by contrast, lost the services of Moussinac (Georges Altman replaced him as *L'Humanité*'s film critic), when he became disillusioned with the cinema and turned his attention to the theater, which led him to spend almost two years (1933–1934) in the Soviet Union.[6]

The success of the sound films produced many more changes in the specialized film journals. Several of the industry weeklies were encouraged to reach out to a nonprofessional readership—particularly *La Cinématographie française* (now edited by P.H. Harlé, in a streamlined, stylish format) and, to a lesser extent, G.-Michel Coissac's *Cinéopse*, Paul de la Borie and Pierre Heuzé's *La Critique cinématographique*, and Léon Brézillon's *L'Ecran* (the official organ of the French Exhibitors Association).[7] The inexpensive new folio-format weeklies intended for a general audience, *Cinémonde* and *Pour Vous*, quickly matched and then outdistanced their older rivals, *Mon-Ciné* and *Ciné-Miroir*. *Cinémonde* found its niche by focusing on the nuts and bolts of current French film production, distribution, and exhibition—particularly after 1931, when Raymond Patenôtre (who now controlled *Le Petit Journal*) became the owner and made Maurice Bessy and Suzanne Chantal editor-in-chief and managing editor, respectively. Under the editorship of Alexandre Arnoux, *Pour Vous* (published by *L'Intransigeant*) exhibited a slightly more intellectual and eclectic theoretical approach, along with a modish graphic design, and acted as a sort of training school for young writers—for example, Nino Frank, Roger Régent, Pierre Leprohon, René Lehman, Lucie Derain—while also depending on the work of established figures such as Emile Vuillermoz, Lucien Wahl, René Clair, and Jean-George Auriol.[8] In the provinces, *Ciné-Bordeaux* staked out a claim as the best film journal outside Paris, especially through the reviews of Marcel Lapierre.[9] Finally, the Catholic press began to take a more active interest in the cinema once again with the weekly "entertainment" magazine, *Choisir*, which absorbed *Les Dossiers du cinéma* (1927–1932).

Under the pressure of these successes, the most prominent independent film journals from the 1920s, Jean Pascal's *Cinémagazine* and Jean Tedesco's *Cinéa-Ciné-pour-tous* (now simply *Cinéa-Ciné*), turned into monthly, more costly publications. Although *Cinéa-Ciné* did not survive beyond 1932, both magazines remained an important forum for those—for instance, Jean Epstein, Marcel Carné, Jean Dréville, Lucien Wahl, Maurice Bessy, Pierre Henry—who refused to break with the earlier avant-garde film theory and practice. And both remained closely associated with the ciné-clubs and avant-garde cinemas, some of whom became involved in an effort to preserve a body of silent films from neglect and destruction, as a heritage of cinema art.[10] Other specialized film journals did not fare so well. Gallimard's deluxe monthly, *La Revue du cinéma*—whose editor, Jean-George Auriol, made it a consistently "nonconformist" advocate of the Surrealist and Soviet films and a forum for such leftist writers as Jacques Bernard Brunius, Jean-Paul Dreyfus, Louis Chavance, and Georges Altman—abruptly ceased publication at the end of 1931. And Marcel Pagnol's conservative and controversial *Les Cahiers du film* lasted just three issues in the winter of 1933–1934. Furthermore, several important lectures and addresses—for instance, see those by Jean Vigo, Jean Cocteau, Sacha Guitry, and Moussinac—that earlier would have been snapped up by a film journal now went unpublished until much later.[11]

While the publication of small independent film journals, which had once flourished in the late 1920s, ceased almost altogether, various intellectual journals devoted to the arts reciprocally became even more open to writings on the cinema.[12] The voices and discourses that once thronged the former now increasingly turned up in the latter. These journals included established "institutions" such as Gallimard's *La Nouvelle Revue française*, the pacifist *L'Europe nouvelle*, and *La Grand Revue*; the Surrealist organs. *Surréalisme au service de la révolution* and *Minotaure*; as well as short-lived maverick monthlies such as Georges Bataille's *Documents* (1929–1930) and Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes's *Bifur* (1929–1931). Here Emmanuel

Mounier's influential leftist Catholic monthly, *Esprit*, deserves special mention for instituting a regular film column by Valéry Jahier, beginning in 1934. Perhaps the most surprising phenomenon was the number of journals that devoted special issues to the cinema, beginning with the modernist art journal. *Cercle et carré* (1930), Philippe Lamour's "technocratic" *Plans* (1931), and Henry de Jouvenal's eclectic *La Revue des vivants* (1931).[13] In the midst of the film industry's deepening crisis in 1933 (as the Depression belatedly hit France), this phenomenon culminated in at least three important special film issues—from *Spectateur, Mouvement*, and *Les Cahiers jaunes* (the latter emerging out of a coalition of Surrealists, Marxists, and former Le Grand Jeu members).[14] Strangely, this widening forum in the intellectual journals did not extend to book publishing. Other than Georges Altman's stridently critical *Ça, c'est du cinéma* (Les Revues, 1931), scriptwriter Yvan Noé's xenophobic and semifictional *L'Epicérie des rêves* (Baudinière, 1933), and André Chevanne's "factual" *L'Industrie du cinéma, le cinéma sonore* (Delmas, 1933), only Henri Fescourt's *Le Cinéma des origines à nos jours* (Editions du cygne, 1932) was of interest; and its collection of essays tended to look backward rather than forward.[15]

FRENCH RESPONSES TO THE SOUND FILM REVOLUTION

Forward/backward—the terms aptly point toward the contradictions that so mark the French writings on the cinema in the early 1930s. The contrasting sense of continuity and sharp break, of advance and retreat, of further exploration and return to the familiar or conventional, not only distinguish certain texts from one another but also characterize the very construction of individual texts themselves. The theoretical positions that had been nurtured throughout the 1920s were now shaken, some almost shattered and others reconstituted anew. In this, French film theory and criticism seems to have been shaped by the pressure or rupture of several historical forces or events, none of which were uniquely French.

Chief among them, of course, was the transformation of the silent film into the sound film, which depended on a technology that, to a large degree, was imposed on the French by the American film industry.[16] None of the sound film recording systems on which the French held patents, for instance, proved commercially viable; and they even found themselves excluded from the Paris conference, in June 1930, at which American and German-Dutch companies divided up worldwide control of the production and distribution of the sound film technology. The sound film revolution provoked a schism at first among both filmmakers and critics. Some, such as Jacques Feyder and Marcel Pagnol, embraced the shift from silent film to sound film with either tempered enthusiasm or outright glee.[17] Others,

such as René Clair and Abel Gance, cautiously accepted the transformation as long as it did not constitute a fundamental disruption of silent film practice or, as Gance even put it, "the new talkie and sound film [were] slowly absorbed by the older silent cinema."[18] However, a good number—for instance, Marcel L'Herbier, Léon Poirier, Germaine Dulac—initially exhibited an open hostility to the sound cinema and defended the continued existence of a separate silent film form.[19] Among the critics, Arnoux perhaps best expressed this antagonism: "I love the cinema deeply. Its interplay of black and white, its silence, its linked rhythms of images, it relegation of speech, that old human bondage, to the background, seem to me the promises of a wonderful art. And now the savage invention has come along to destroy everything. I may be pardoned for such bitterness and unfairness. . . . We are witnessing either a death or a birth, no one can yet tell which."[20] Along with several ciné-club supporters, Vuillermoz stubbornly proclaimed his continued animosity to the sound film and vainly held on to a defense of silent film art well into the 1930s.[21] And his position, all too reminiscent of an earlier stance at the end of the Great War, was exacerbated by what he saw as a new mass audience ignorant of silent film "language," intolerant of technical or aesthetic discussions, and seemingly interested only in stories and stars.[22] As it turned out, most filmmakers and critics ultimately came to terms with the sound cinema; but, in the process, Vuillermoz was among those who either saw their influence steadily wane or else suddenly fell silent.

The sound film also had the dubious effect of reviving the questions of similarity and difference that had dominated French writings before and during the Great War. The introduction of speech, dialogue, and an actor's verbal performance reframed the question of how the French cinema could differ from and challenge the American cinema, which as before often provided exemplary models for French criticism. *Pour Vous* particularly took up the problem of this challenge and suggested optimistically that France had certain advantages over other nations—many fine dramatists, a supple and precise language, and a tendency toward rational discourse—that well suited it for producing "talkies."[23] The talkie just might be a blessing in disguise and might allow the French cinema to regain some of its former prominence. Among others, Georges Altman, however, concluded pessimistically that the French or Latin mind was not all that well suited for the cinema, whether silent or sound.[24] Furthermore, the consequent influx of playwrights and stage actors into the film industry—ostensibly in order to produce the best dialogue in screen performances—once again raised the old question, long thought to be dead and buried, about the cinema's relation to the theater. While Pagnol and his cohorts sought to annex the cinema to the theater, Clair and a host of others refought the battle that

Louis Delluc, Vuillermoz, and others had supposedly won years before—to establish the cinema as an autonomous art—and argued for the sound film as a new form of cinema, and not theater. The debate over this question will demand further attention later.

But the sound film revolution was perceived as part of a larger process as well. Ever since the earliest writings before the war, in a litany that was repeated over and over, the French had subscribed to the myth of technological "progress" that heralded the coming of sound film, color film, three-dimensional film, and, eventually, television. Now that one of those anticipated technological advances had been propelled into mass production, filmmakers and critics were confronted with the question of just what specific relations could or should exist between image and sound in the cinema. After a brief initial period of resistance, the myth reestablished its hold; and synchronized as well as postsynchronized sound recording was accepted and even championed as progress by most French writers—from Feyder and L'Herbier to Clair and Pagnol. Generally, they considered the new technology—whether the sound complemented the image or vice versa—as a significant means of either representing the "real" with greater verisimilitude, telling a story with more psychological interiority, or else expressing more directly an artist's thinking and feeling. While restoring a sense of perceptual unity or totality to the cinema experience, sound and especially speech also shored up the possibility of a coherent national identity, which, in the ideological polarization of the early 1930s, appealed to fascist writers such as Vinneuil.[25] Jean Epstein, however, offered perhaps the most interesting version of this "progress"—even going beyond the technological possibilities of the period—as a journey of joint epistemological and aesthetic exploration.[26] Not only, he argued, should the camera regain its mobility, in order to investigate the real world, but the microphone, too, should have an equal degree of mobility. "It's across the sound fields of the vast world that we must spread our microphones, searching the expanses with sound-sticks and selective filters."[27] Epstein thus conceived of what he called a *phonogénie* of film sound—through the transformation of reality by means of the audio recorder—to complement the long accepted *photogénie* of the film image. And he envisioned the construction of a new film form as well as a new "world" by editing together quite different image and sound tracks, each recorded independently of the other in the real world.[28]

A number of writers eventually dissented from such visionary optimism—for instance, playwrights Antonin Artaud (bitterly) and George Neveux (ironically)—and Epstein himself became discouraged as his own film practice was compromised.[29] The Romanian poet and essayist, Benjamin Fondane, however, articulated perhaps the most provocative dissent,

after earlier sharing in the general optimism.[30] Initially, for instance, Fondane urged the conjunction of different images and sounds, much like Gance and Clair, to create a coherent, compressed action or impression—Walter Ruttman's *Melody of the World* (1929) provided one kind of model.[31] But he also advocated the juxtaposition or disjunction of image and sound—something that Luis Buñuel's *Un Chien andalou* (1929) and Georges Huguet's *La Perle* (1929) had already begun to put in practice and that Artaud attempted in his script of "La Révolte du boucher" (1930).[32] Moreover, Fondane suggested that sound could be magnified and deformed, much as earlier writers had emphasized the magnification and deformation of the image, thereby projecting the notion of a new form of sound film not all that unlike Epstein's.[33] Yet Fondane's hopes were circumscribed by a growing realization, derived from several years of working in the scenario department of Paramount's Paris studio.[34] Taking up a loosely Marxist position, he recognized that the technological advance of sound film served a useful function in a worldwide capitalist economic system (dominated by the Americans) that was beginning to depend on "planned obsolescence" in the production and marketing of commodities. Exactly why—as he put it, linking the cinema to other mass market commodities—did we need a "six-cylinder film"?[35] That kind of "progress" merely helped sustain an increasingly unstable, untenable system whose principal aim was commodity reification and capital accumulation.

FURTHER POLARIZATION OF THE IDEOLOGICAL GROUND

This discussion of sound film technology brings up a cluster of historical forces or events—economic and political—that contextualized and shaped French writing on the cinema in the early 1930s. One, of course, was the Great Depression, which raised questions about the institutional structure of the French film industry—both capital investment and ticket receipts, for instance, declined steadily during this period[36]—as well as the stability of the "Western democracies." As a symbolic counter to this threat, however, the French sought to celebrate their colonial empire and the notion of France as the primary civilizing force in the world, as well as the crucial importance of the army to that notion, all of which were spotlighted in the 1931 Paris Colonial Exhibition.[37] Another even more significant historical force involved the seductive advances of fascism in Italy and, more tellingly, in Germany, as well as the opposite attraction of the alternative economic and political model of the Soviet Union. These lures led many intellectuals in France, according to Daniel-Rops, writing in *La Grande Revue* at the time, "to gravitate either toward the Communists or toward Action française."[38] Or even further to the right of Action française—to the highly

disciplined Croix de feu (commanded by Colonel de la Rocque)[39] or the circle of writers putting out *Je suis partout*—for, as "a new form of revolt competitive with Marxism," Alice Kaplan writes, fascism constituted a kind of "radical chic" of the early 1930s.[40]

French writing on the cinema could hardly escape this ever sharpening division into ideological camps. Witness the right's virulent campaign againt Buñuel's *L'Age d'or* (1930), which led to its banning—both nicely documented by Georges Altman.[41] Witness also Vinneuil's celebration of a "virile [French] cinema," based on an all-male community, and his caustic, jingoistic attack on Reboux's mildly pacifist review of Raymond Bernard's acclaimed World War I epic, *Les Croix de bois* (1932).[42] As before and during the Great War, however, the spectrum of ideological positions was far from clear-cut. The differences separating the advocates of an elitist film art from those of a popular film art or those defending a modernist aesthetic from their opponents, for instance, tended to cut across any such simple left/right divisions, as did the differences between those generally supportive of the film industry and those highly critical of the status quo. In their critical attitude toward the industry, however, left and right did tend to diverge. While the left hesitantly advanced alternative models calling for a more or less radical structural transformation, the right began seeking to "purify" the industry or eliminate "foreigners" from positions of influence: for instance, see Yvan Noé's conclusion, in 1933, that one of the dangers of the American cinema—and, implicitly, the French cinema as well—was that it acted as a front for "Jewish imperialism."[43] Such anti-Semitism would become more overt and widespread as the 1930s wore on.

Within this somewhat unstable spectrum, those writings weighted toward the left seem most appealing, not only because of the questions they raise—particularly about the cinema as an economic institution and as an instrument of information dissemination and ideological persuasion—but also because of the contradictions they exhibit. Altman's *Ça, c'est du cinéma* (1931), and Moussinac's "farewell" speech at the Bellevilloise cinema, in early 1933, probably constitute the primary texts here.[44] In somewhat simplified terms, Altman detailed the economic and ideological hegemony of the American cinema as well as the French cinema's aping of its "betters," especially in the kinds of milieux, characters, and stories that dominated its fiction films, documentaries, and newsreels.[45] Yet this merely spelled out what writers had been saying for years and what Georges Duhamel had recently put in extreme terms—"a people who has been subjected for half a century to the current American cinema is on the road to the most abject decadence."[46] More specifically, Altman unmasked the ideological function of film censorship in France—in his scathing analysis of the banning of Buñuel's *L'Age d'or* (1930)[47]—and of mass market publicity or advertising (for films as well as other commodities). Yet here, too, his perceptive critique of the "ideological" effects of advertising, which reduced the world to manipulatable clichés or illusions, was blindly juxtaposed to the supposedly transparent "truth" of the Soviet cinema—"no thesis, no doctrine, no cliché."[48] Moussinac instead focused on the "death" of the avant-garde and the loss of independence in film production and even film criticism—the result, as he saw it, of the French avant-garde's failure to confront the capitalistic economic conditions of the cinema.[49] The costs of sound film production and exhibition had concentrated economic power in a near monopoly of big studios and cinema circuits, as well as many smaller speculators, thereby destroying the viability of the once numerous "independent" production units, specialized cinemas, and ciné-clubs.[50] And various political pressures, Moussinac concluded—the continuing censorship of Soviet and French films, the growing influence of the Catholic Church within the industry, and the possibility of explicitly fascist French films—as well as others he merely assumed—for instance, the increasing readership of right-wing newspapers and magazines and the high membership in such groups as Croix de feu—were threatening to consolidate a dominant rightist ideological position in France.[51]

Altman and Moussinac's colleagues also tended to take contradictory positions and to share the latter's pessimism. After presenting a similar analysis, for instance, Clair simply hoped that the Depression would eliminate the monopoly of the big studios and make way for a system of "independent," cooperative artisan-like groups for the production of narrative films.[52] He was so vague about models, however, that his solution seemed extremely personal, based on his own unique position within the French film industry. "I'm terribly individualistic," Clair admitted, "and I'm stubborn enough to think that everything good comes from individualism; even the Russians prove it, despite what they say."[53] The Dutch filmmaker, Joris Ivens, on the other hand, seemed to think that the best answer to countering the domination of the "Big Companies" in the industry and sustaining the existence of an avant-garde lay in documentary film practice.[54] But he tied such production to promotional and advertising ends (as he himself did in practice), assuming naively that the documentary filmmaker's alleged inability to lie or distort the truth could coexist with an advertiser's interests and demands.[55] Another answer came from Henri Clerc, in a series of articles in *Paris-Soir* (August 1933), where he proposed the establishment of a state bank exclusively to underwrite the French film industry.[56] But the growing instability of the French state seemed to preclude such a solution, in almost everyone's eyes—see, for example, Moussinac—no matter their ideological stance.[57] Again, Fondane's position in this spectrum provided some rare critical awareness. Although no more specific

about alternative models than most others, he did explicitly posit a choice between working in the "free"/capitalist cinema of Europe and the "slave" (Slav)/communist cinema of the USSR. And while he himself personally would much prefer the latter, he openly criticized what he saw as the general subordination of the Soviet cinema to propagandistic ends.[58]

None of these writers, however, considered several important factors. The French cinema, as Ginette Vincendeau argues, had now begun to function not only as a manufacturer of products or commodities but as a service industry, an industry that had developed and institutionalized ritualistic patterns of behavior, whether in the city centers or in the outlying *faubourgs* and *banlieus*.[59] Disrupting or transforming these patterns of behavior and the distribution and exhibition practices that sustained them, however, remained largely unaddressed. Furthermore, film production was concentrated not only in the big studios, despite Ivens's diatribe, but in advertising, which now constituted a major intermission slot in cinema programs; and a good number of filmmakers worked on advertising or industrial films—including Carné, Brunius, Jean Dréville, Pierre Chenal, and Jacques and Pierre Prévert.[60] Moreover, writers such as Altman and Moussinac either ignored or knew nothing about a specific sort of film practice then emerging in Great Britain, Germany, Austria, Belgium, and the Netherlands, where state bureaucracies, political parties, and trade unions were becoming deeply involved in film production and exhibition.[61] In France, in fact, despite Marcel Carné's call for a socially committed cinema, neither the Communists nor the Socialists (nor any other political group, for that matter) showed any interest in producing their own newsreels or documentaries, with the exception of the Communist Party's *La Crise* (1931 or 1932), until well after the alleged fascist coup attempt in February 1934.[62] Thus, the potential for a leftist film practice seemed severely curtailed—a "Popular Front" cinema was almost unthinkable, at least in early 1933—and Moussinac's prognosis for a new alternative cinema sounded quite convincingly pessimistic.

THE RETURN OF A CINEMA OF REVELATION

Under the pressure of these historical forces, certain previously prominent conceptions of the cinema diminished in importance while others more closely tied to a politicized or overtly ideological cinema flourished anew. For one, a quasi-semiotic concept of the cinema as a system of signs of unstable, fluctuating, polyvalent signification that Epstein and others had articulated in scattered remarks in the 1920s, now seemed to disappear from his few writings. In its stead, Epstein reiterated his idea that the cinema created a new system of "lyrosophical" cognition that could reveal the

unconscious mysteries of nature, and human nature, through it epistemological exploration of time as well as space.[63] For another, the Modernist concept of "pure cinema" as the construction or composition of graphic and rhythmic film elements, once heatedly debated in the 1920s, now either marked time or else was deflected—for example, in Gaston Pagès' long, systematic analysis of film as a unique spatio-temporal construction and transformation of reality, which summarized a fifteen-year-long line of French thinking.[64] Perhaps the most interesting statement along these lines came from the celebrated architect, Le Corbusier, whose defense of film art combined a reprise of Epstein's lyrosophy with a Purist aesthetic, the latter reinvested with the material of reality.[65] Yet both Le Corbusier and Pagès curiously ignored sound as a constituent element. For those who did focus on the interrelationship between sound and image in the cinema, one has to turn to Clair, Pagnol, Altman, and others on the subject of film narrative or to Epstein on documentary or to Fondane on the animated cartoon. What did, however, regain the prominence it had earlier enjoyed during and after the Great War—and what would continue to increase in importance in the pages of *Esprit* and finally in the writings of André Bazin—was the conception of cinema as an instrument of *revelation*.

Here the French seemed less interested in how the cinema functioned as a means of perception or as a process of representation and more interested in what it was that the camera or screen revealed and how that held and absorbed the spectator. One large, amorphous cluster of writings remained indebted to the long tradition of French idealism and the belief in a transcendent truth or reality. Some of these were still marked by a Symbolist aesthetic—for example, Vuillermoz's reviews, Pagès's summary essay, Daniel-Rops's defense of a cinema of the subjective or "metaphysics of the soul," and even Vinneuil's celebration of Feyder's *Le Grand Jeu* (1934) as "a series of mental or spiritual states."[66] Others, from the Grand Jeu circle, seemed to bind up the cinema with a peculiar *combinatoire* of neo-Platonism, phenomenology, and primitive mythology. The poet Monny de Boully, for instance, believed that the film image could act magically as a medium for the primordial Images of the universal mind, just as did trances, sorcery, and totemic ceremonies.[67] Roger Gilbert-Lecomte similarly thought the camera could convey the universal Forms of Mind, the collective mythology constituting the ground of Being—perhaps a variation on Jung's collective unconscious—a conceptual base quite at odds with either Epstein's lyrosophical epistemology or the collective materiality of the Marxists.[68] Such theorizing, if conceived in national or racial terms, it's disquieting to note, could easily provide support for the mystifying, totalizing experience of a fascist cinema. Georges Neveux, on the other hand, took a different tack by elevating the representation of three-

dimensional space itself to a quasi-transcendental plane.[69] With the discovery of three-dimensional film, he claimed, the eye would be overwhelmed by what it could perceive. Films would need only thirty or forty shots, rather than the then-current five hundred or more, in order for the spectator "to penetrate into the film" and explore the infinite depths of the image. Neveux, of course, was writing tongue-in-cheek, as part of a mocking fantasy of technological progress in the cinema. Without the irony, however, his words come close to articulating several of the basic precepts of Bazin's later film theory.[70] Whatever form the cinema took—and on that question these writers were either vague or all-inclusive—their interest tended to be centered on fragments, on moments of revelation or intense expressiveness, whose transcendent meaning conveyed a coherence, not of the text, but of the world.

Another cluster of writings, primarily Surrealist in inspiration, sought the revelation of a very different world. The locus of the cinema's power, for these writers, continued to lie in its close association with the discursive play of the unconscious—almost as if the screen functioned as a mirror or dream site—and in its potential for transforming the material world.[71] The Surrealists's practice of *synthetic criticism*—that is, distilling the latent "dream content" of popular films—continued to flourish in the early 1930s. In his essay on the Marx Brothers, for instance, Artaud celebrated the hallucinatory twilight finale of *Monkey Business* (1931) for the way its comedy provoked the eruption of seething anarchy (sexual in nature) and total rebellion against convention.[72] And in his review of *King Kong* (1933), Jean Lévy brought this critical praxis to a kind of culmination by recuperating the absurdity of the film's plot, "its violent oneiric power," "its monstrous eroticism," and the *unheimlich* (uncanny) quality of its sets and special effects.[73] *King Kong*'s incoherence and inconsistency, and even its incompetent dubbing (in French), were turned into a kind of "deconstructive" poetry. The Surrealists's own attempts to transform the world, through the cinema, by "contaminating" everyday life with the unconscious, however, were largely stymied. The costs of sound film production prohibited the realization of any of their projects, after Buñuel's *L'Age d'or* (1930). And their manifesto in support of *L'Age d'or*—celebrating unrestrained sexual desire as the basis for revolution—seems to have had no issue, once the film was banned.[74] Thereafter, and coincident with their official break with the French Communist Party, a mood of pessimism set in among the Surrealists, at least with regard to the cinema.[75] Perhaps most symptomatic of that pessimism was Artaud's bitter attack, in "The Premature Old Age of the Cinema," (1933) on the introduction of sound and its heritage of outmoded conventions as detrimental to the extraordinary dissociative power of the screen.[76]

ADAPTATIONS AND ORIGINALS: PAGNOL VERSUS CLAIR

The introduction of sound, consequently, forced writers and filmmakers to rethink the parameters of each of the major narrative and non-narrative film forms for which the French had developed some sort of theoretical basis. And that rethinking, in conjunction with changes in actual film practice, led to the proposal and defense of several new hybrid forms. The spectrum of this polemical or "theoretical" work encompassed much of the French writing on the cinema in the early 1930s and provides a convenient way to further analyze groups of writers and individual texts. The obvious place to begin is with the most controversial form: the theater-film or what the French themselves quickly labeled "canned theater."

The theater-film has long been associated with Marcel Pagnol, and with some justification. After all, it was Pagnol who, in *Le Journal* (17 May 1930), first urged his fellow playwrights to adopt the new means of expression that the "talkie" was making available—"to achieve effects never before possible on stage."[77] And the success of such films as Jean Choux's *Jean de la Lune* (1931) and Alexander Korda's *Marius* (1931), adapted from a Pagnol script, provided an early model for the theater-film.[78] Even such critics as Vuillermoz grudgingly accepted the form as early as 1931, with the meek reservation that it merely not exclude other kinds of films from production.[79] When Pagnol, Sacha Guitry, and others came to formulate their major statements in 1932–1933, they were already summing up the initial stage of several years of thinking and practice.[80] The principles of Pagnol's and Guitry's "theory" were few and simple, and seemed to return to the formulations of twenty years before. First of all, film was not a medium of artistic invention or original creation. Rather, it was a "minor art" of recording and communicating or disseminating a work of art already conceived beforehand, primarily for the stage.[81] Consequently, the playwright was the true author of a film. Sustained verbal language or dialogue was the prime mode of discourse, and the "language" of the silent cinema had to be either abandoned or subordinated to speech—hence his admiration for the twenty-two-minute "long take" scene in Marc Allégret's *Fanny* (1932).[82] The performance of stage actors, especially their verbal performance, was foregrounded above all else—and Pagnol literally condemned silent film actors to death![83] The director, cameraman, and others were merely technicians in the service of the playwright and his text and the spectacle of the stage actor. At best, by learning the new technical resources of the cinema, the playwright or poet might be able to reinvent the theater and thus, at some later time, conceive original works for the cinema.[84] By the end of this period, however, some critics concluded that Pagnol himself seemed incapable of doing so. Despite his appreciation for its acting, dia-

logue, and certain long takes, Valéry Jahier, for instance, found the commercial success of Pagnol's *Angèle* (1934) had little to do with cinema.[85]

From the very beginning, however, as its popularity mushroomed, the theater-film came under attack. Philippe Soupault, Altman, and others, for instance, wrote scathing critiques of *Jean de la Lune* (1931) as a "dangerous film" that was launching the French "talkie" on a mistaken path.[86] The leading opponent of the theater-film, of course, was René Clair. It was Clair who quickly pounced on Pagnol's early pronouncements and reasserted the *auteur* status of the director and his "sense of cinema," in contrast to Pagnol's subjugated *metteur-en-scène*, as well as the primacy of the image over the word (or at least its equivalence in value), to which even Feyder had called attention.[87] Pagnol's writing was shockingly presumptuous, he noted quite correctly, and astonishingly ignorant of cinema history. Accordingly, in *Pour Vous* (3 July 1930), Clair offered a short history lesson to counter his antagonist's crude conception of the silent film as no more than an extension of pantomime.[88] In one sense, however, Clair's lesson was beside the point, for Pagnol's position was simply an extreme form of an attitude shared by most French critics and filmmakers.[89] Film now was essentially a medium of *adaptation*. Marcel L'Herbier's essay, "Créer, c'est adapter," (1931) is perhaps crucial here, for it provided an authoritative defense of a practice that had come to dominate the French film industry, and that defense was set forth by a prominent former member of the 1920s avant-garde.[90] L'Herbier countered the old idea that the author of a play or novel adapted for the cinema was the author of the film version by arguing that the work of film adaptation itself was a creative act and hence the adaptor, too, was a legitimate creative artist.[91] And he buttressed his argument not only with examples from the cinema but with "masters" from the other arts, such as Shakespeare. As logical and lucid as L'Herbier's essay may be (in contrast to his earlier writings), its effect was to justify a form of narrative film dependent on drama and fiction (and thus on literary genres) and to constrain the originality and personal involvement of the filmmaker within the context of a preestablished, respected story. The only question, as L'Herbier suggested, arose over exactly how much latitude the film adaptor had with respect to his source text—for example, see the debate over Claude Autant-Lara's rather free adaptation (with Jacques Prévert's assistance) of the Haynn-Croisset operetta, *Ciboulette* (1931).[92]

Adaptations of one kind or another thus constituted the mainstream practice of the French cinema in the early 1930s. Although Altman labeled this practice the "Paramount ideology"[93]—Paramount did produce *Marius* as well as scores of other adaptations—in fact, it permeated the industry. The largest film producer, Pathé-Natan, for instance, was known not only for Bernard's monumental adaptations of *Les Croix de bois* (1932) and *Les*

Misérables (1934) but also for its military vaudevilles and musical comedies or revues—for example, Pierre Colombier's *Le Roi des resquilleurs* (1930) and *Le Roi du cirage* (1931), starring the popular vaudeville singer, Georges Milton.[94] As a counter to this practice, a number of writers sought to derive an original narrative film form, preferably from original scenarios. They wished to preserve the best features of silent film language and integrate or "enrich" them with the new resources of sound. "The talking film," wrote Jean Grémillon, "raised the question of dramatic construction, means of expression, acting, and editing in a brand-new way."[95] While some like Vuillermoz sought in vain to encourage a film form that would appeal to the spectators who once supported the avant-garde (for him, an "educated" elite), others like Altman fought to draw attention to a range of unpatronized films and new or redefined genres—for instance, from Clair's musical fantasies to Grémillon's *La Petite Lise* (1930), from King Vidor's *Hallelujah* (1929) to Howard Hawks' *Dawn Patrol* (1930) or Rouben Mamoulian's *City Streets* (1931).[96]

But one particular kind of film, the French realized, none too quickly, seemed to have the makings of a *popular* original form for them. Clair and others found a basis for this in Henry Beaumont's *Broadway Melody* (1929), which integrated song and dance, sound effects, camera movement, and new patterns of editing (alternating or juxtaposing image and sound) into an original "musical" form.[97] *Pour Vous* insisted on Clair's own contribution to the development of a French version of this form, beginning with *Sous les toits de Paris* (1929).[98] After brashly asserting his status as an *auteur*, Clair himself outlined at least three different kinds of scenes that he was trying to bring together in his first sound film: ". . . purely visual scenes in which the sound plays the role of an orchestra, scenes with images which were rendered intelligible by sound effects, and finally certain scenes in which speech was used either to create a special effect or to explain the action."[99] Although most critics initially wrote off *Sous les toits de Paris*, an early admirer of Clair, Marcel Lapierre, found in it an integrated model of silent film language and sound film techniques.[100] Lapierre especially singled out the way narrative delay and suspense were produced by holding off speech and how the songs functioned within the story instead of simply interrupting it. And on the eve of the premiere of his second sound film, *Le Million* (1931), Clair added several further distinguishing characteristics to this model: improvised dialogue, for greater spontaneity, and satirical choral songs and speeches rather than the more conventional duets.[101] There was only one important thing he left out of the model, other than the question of actual narrative construction, which, as usual with the French, remained unarticulated. Clair's films also relied on a unique element of mise-en-scène for their atmosphere of fantasy—the light, simplified stylization

of Lazare Meerson's decors.[102] All this combined, Nino Frank concluded, was decidedly and distinctly French.[103]

REALISM AND THE SOUND FILM

While Clair's development of a French musical fantasy form derived from a relatively coherent theoretical base and produced what Marcel Bardèche and Robert Brasillach would soon call a "school" of filmmakers,[104] the well-established theory of a realist narrative film—that is, one producing the illusion of reality—spread out in several overlapping and almost contradictory directions. In an essay introducing his first sound feature film, *L'Or des mers* (1932), for instance, Epstein reiterated his commitment to a realist filmmaking strategy based on a documentary-like form of collaboration.[105] That collaboration involved Epstein and his miniscule crew, on one side, and the people of a small provincial community, here the islanders of Hoedik off Brittany, on the other. While they would contribute the subject, locations, and cast, he would provide the technical and directorial expertise to represent their story and world on film. That story, the natural landscapes, and the nature of the people themselves all helped justify Epstein's efforts to stress the significance of the image in relation to sound effects and music and to restrict speech to the subordinate role it once played in silent film production. Much like his concept of *phonogénie*, however, Epstein's theory and practice had little impact on the early 1930s.[106]

A much more commercially viable form of realism began to coalesce out of the conjunction of Pagnol, Carné, and the populist and proletarian literature then enjoying a vogue in France. Despite the theatrical basis of Pagnol's scripts and films, critics tended to celebrate them within a cinematic tradition—the authenticity of their representation of daily life in Marseille and its environs. René Bizet's review of *Marius* (1931) is exemplary here. In that film, just as Vinneuil did in *Les Croix de bois*, interestingly enough, Bizet felt a direct contact with "the soul or spirit of a people."[107] This came about, he noted, through the accents and gestures of the actors along with "the simple, sincere poetry" of the cinematography and decors (the interiors and streets of the old harbor area).[108] There was a paradox here, however, for Pagnol's theoretical insistence on the priority of verbal language was undermined by the production history of *Marius*, in that Paramount produced French, German, and English versions of the film.[109] This meant that Bizet's remarks could refer only to the French version of the film and that its illusion of authenticity depended heavily on recognizable patterns of speech. By the time the authenticity of Pagnol's practice had been exposed as limited, however, and his writings turned him into an aggressive antagonist, the center of the realist aesthetic had shifted elsewhere.

A realist aesthetic implicitly underpinned Altman's texts, of course,[110] but it was taken up most explicitly by Marcel Carné. At one point, in his review of Sudow's *Kuhle Wampe* (1931) and Ekk's *Road to Life* (1931), Carné seemed to call for a narrative cinema that would bear witness to the collective struggle of the French working class, and thus create "the real image of a nation."[111] But he quickly stepped back from this briefly sketched position (which seemed to subsume class interests within national ones) to advocate a less radical form of "populist film" that would merely document the ambiance of certain working-class quarters in Paris.[112] Here the manifestoes of Léon Lemonnier and Henri Poulaille, the leading proponents of a French populist and proletarian literature, as well as a series of inquiries that culminated in an important debate on proletarian literature sponsored by Henri Barbusse's *Monde* (December 1931), provided a crucial context and set of examples.[113] In contrast to the privileged dialogue and performances of Pagnol's films and the stylized decors of Clair's film (which, he noted, had soon become conventionalized), Carné wanted fiction films to be conceived and shot like documentaries in the streets of Grenelle, Belleville, the Canal Saint-Martin area, and the *faubourgs*.[114] Or, he could have said, like Brassaï's photographs, in *Paris de Nuit* (1933), of "this underworld that represents Paris at its least cosmopolitan, at its most alive, its most authentic."[115] While Carné did not rule out the use of adaptations—for instance, Eugène Dabit's *Hôtel du Nord* (1931), which he himself would later turn into a controversial film—or professional actors, he held true to the longstanding aesthetic tradition: to describe the simple life of a humble people and depict the atmosphere of their milieu.[116] Here Carné had a measure of support in Elie Faure's hope that the cinema would be able to represent a collective class presence or voice, as well as in *Esprit*'s cautious call for a cinema geared to the working class and concerned with real life—that is, physical, psychological, and even socially "nonconformist."[117] Despite a few prototypical sound films such as Grémillon's *La Petite Lise* (1930), whose simple, discreet use of dialogue, sound effects, and *silence* created a quasi-realistic atmosphere of dread and suspense,[118] it was not until 1934 that at least one film seemed to exemplify Carné's position perfectly. That film was Pierre Chenal's *La Rue sans nom* (1934), which, according to Vinneuil (who had to conflate naturalism and populism with the Soviet cinema, for ideological reasons), was suffused with the "strange melancholic poetry" that emanated from Marcel Aymé's source novel.[119] And in his review of *La Rue sans nom*, *Cinémonde*'s chief film critic, Michel Gorel, finally attached a label to this kind of film that would stick—"poetic realism."[120]

One further voice finally began to edge toward this loosely defined aesthetic of realism. Well before shooting started on his Pagnol-backed production of *Toni* (1935), Jean Renoir articulated a distinctive realist position that allowed him to work either in the studio or on location and in a manner that led him to pursue a modified version of Pagnol's emphasis on performance. He had come to focus, Renoir said, on creating an environment or milieu in which the actors could work so freely that they could actually "come alive" as their characters.[121] This assumed a high degree of improvisation and collaboration in the rehearsal process (the opposite of Clair's meticulous control) that extended into the shooting. And it led Renoir to consider his first sound films almost as documentaries about his actor-characters, in which "the spark of life" was captured and revealed as often and as frankly as possible. It was precisely this quality that Auriol had chosen to single out for praise in a finely detailed, although sometimes harsh review of Renoir's earlier *La Chienne* (1931): "the people who inhabit it are . . . characters whose deepest selves have been exposed and whose nature has been explored with a rather cruel curiosity."[122] These marvelously candid moments, however, were scattered unevenly among a plethora of short scenes, whose construction as a narrative was clumsy and shapeless.[123] Thus *La Chienne*'s lack of technical competence, rhythmic consistency, and narrative clarity and coherence, Auriol complained, kept it from becoming the successful populist film it might have been.

Some of what characterized these critical writings on the realist narrative film also marked those on the sound film documentary: and here they pointed, despite some contradictions, to a socially committed film practice. Jean Dréville, for instance, argued that the real "spirit of cinema resides in documentary," for only there can one "discern what is photogenic from what is not."[124] Epstein also persisted in believing in the transformative or photogenic power of the cinematic apparatus. And in terms of documentary, his interest in the natural world and the relation of image and sound combined in a formulation that even looked ahead to the *cinéma vérité* and direct cinema theories of the early 1960s.[125] Joris Ivens and Jean Vigo focused instead on the interaction of filmmaker and social reality. In contrast to his naive assumption that documentary was inherently truthful,[126] here Ivens asserted that the filmmaker had to select and interpret a part of material reality. And whatever the selection, he argued (despite the contradictions of his own practice), that interpretation ought to be politically determined and "represent the expression of the masses" as against the interests of the "Big Companies."[127] Jean Vigo was even more adamant, at least initially, in his advocacy of a leftist social action documentary. The filmmaker should deal with "society and its relationships with individuals and things" and should take a clear position on socially provocative subjects. That position, as in Vigo's own *A Propos de Nice* (1930), would "open the spectator's eyes" and make the spectator "an accomplice in a revolutionary solution."[128] Or, as in Yves Allégret and Jacques Prévert's *Prix et profits* (1932), it would encourage a specific political solution—an alliance of peasants and workers to create a new economic system of exchange.[129] In short, through such experiments in political pamphleteering and socio-economic analysis, documentary offered a potentially viable but as yet little recognized form of leftist film practice.

FANTASY OR ANTI-ILLUSIONISM AND THE SOUND FILM

Finally, theoretical work on the construction of original forms of film "fantasy," other than Clair's musical fantasies and satires, seems to have followed several parallel lines in the early 1930s. And the texts situated along those lines returned to the past as often as they pointed into the realms of possibility. The concept of a coherent subjective narrative cinema, for which Vuillermoz had proselytized so many years before, lingered on like a pale, worn specter in his writings. Yet it also reached a fullness of expression in Pagès's long essay in *La Grande Revue* (1932), which reiterated cogently and systematically—if without originality—much of what Vuillermoz, Ricciotto Canudo, and Germaine Dulac had developed in the 1920s.[130] And it turned roughly incoherent, at least on the surface, in the hands of Cocteau. In his introduction to *Le Sang d'un poète* (1932), Cocteau seemed to literalize the Surrealists' mirror metaphor of the screen and take the poet/spectator through an elliptical, discontinuous series of "dream" images that "captured" his own "poetic states."[131] These images may have been presented quite obviously through "tricks"—or the "artless" strategies which Noël Burch has defined as characteristic of the prewar "Primitive Cinema"[132]—yet Cocteau's discourse itself clearly was framed within an idealist conception of the poet's superior awareness.

The Surrealists themselves (or former Surrealists), by contrast, envisioned a narrative cinema that constituted a sequence of events analogous in its illogic and spatio-temporal discontinuity to that of the unconscious or dream and that worked on the spectator in such a way as to make him "lose consciousness" and thus liberate his unconscious being. While some like Artaud became disillusioned with this vision, others such as Fondane and Boully continued to use Artaud's writings, including even "The Theater of Cruelty" (1932), as a basis for the renewal of the absurd and the marvelous (the effects of the unconscious) in the cinema.[133] Scenarios by Artaud, Desnos, Buñuel, and others, however, remained unrealized (partly due to the costs of sound film production) and instead found their way into the burgeoning ranks of published "scenario" literature.[134] Yet at least two

films emerged that came close to achieving their ends—Buñuel's *L'Age d'or* (1930) and the Prévert's *L'Affaire est dans le sac* (1932).[135] Although championed by the Surrealists, *L'Age d'or* had mixed reviews, when it received any attention at all, even in the pages of *La Revue du cinéma*. Echoing the earlier comments of Robert Aron and Jean Vigo on *Un Chien andalou* (1929), Louis Chavance noted, for instance, that Buñuel's new film offered an eccentric but innovative collage construction—juxtaposing newsreel, documentary study, and fiction—a construction whose discontinuities heightened its anger and uncontrolled passion.[136] Jean-Paul Dreyfus was more critical, though no less enthusiastic. Admittedly, *L'Age d'or* was technically inferior to and less unified than *Un Chien andalou*, and its obvious obsession with sacrilege seemed tainted with a suspect mysticism; but it contained "the ferocious and liberating seeds of a [new form of] 'comedy'," which Dreyfus celebrated "for the stupefaction, the mute and hostile panic into which it would plunge hundreds of spectators."[137] As for *L'Affaire est dan le sac*, a Groupe Octobre production, its comic skit construction and spirit of rebellion were quickly linked to those Surrealist favorites, the Marx Brothers. "Each gag explodes like a bomb," wrote Michel Gorel, "instead of being brought in at the end of a long, tedious series of preliminary transactions (as in the case of our usual comedies); and all the actors really engage in playing, like children or sleepwalkers or savages, just to have a good time and be happy. . . ."[138] In a summary essay at the end of 1934, however, Roger Leenhardt would disavow such a view—instead of working smoothly in tandem, Prévert's satirical verbal exchanges, he found, worked far better than did the film's visual gags.[139]

A second model of film "fantasy" arose from the French interest in the sound animated cartoon. On the one hand, Eugène Deslaw spoke for those who quickly realized that "today [1930] the formula of abstract cinema has materialized in sound cartoons."[140] Accordingly, Deslaw, his colleague Jan Brzekowski, and, implicitly, even Le Corbusier advocated an animated film form that foregrounded its rhythmic and compositional patterns—in the tradition of Viking Eggeling's *Symphonie diagonale* (1922), Fernand Léger's *Ballet mécanique* (1924), Dulac's *Arabesques* (1929) and Deslaw's own *Nuits electriques* (1929).[141] Here sound would provide a rhythmic and tonal complement to the film images. The theory of a pure cinema, which had generated such a debate in the late 1920s (whether its rhythmic form depended on referential or completely abstract images), was thereby reconstituted, in a diminished discourse, on a slightly different base. On the other hand, Fondane and Boully saw the abstract formal elements of the animated cartoon as a newly developed means to another end. The inherent possibilities for metamorphosis, the paradoxically deliberate production of the arbitrary by a mechanical apparatus, and the creation of original sounds

through electronic "distortion" all lent themselves to a quasi-Surrealist aesthetic.[142] The animated cartoon, perhaps even more than the "live action" narrative film, had the potential to evoke the phantasmagoric, the marvelous, and the absurd.[143] Although they glimpsed this sporadically in Walt Disney's early sound cartoons, their own attempts to realize this potential in practice met with no success within the film industry—for instance, Jacques Prévert's scenario for *Baladar* (1930) remained unfinished.[144] And such practice probably could not, as it might have in the 1920s, now exist on the margins of that industry.

CONCLUSION

In more ways than one, the early years of the 1930s can be seen as a transitional period in French writing on the cinema. The sound film revolution consolidated the dominance of a certain kind of narrative cinema and silenced much of the avant-garde of the 1920s. Consequently, the nature and very existence of an "independent" cinema, from production to exhibition, were challenged as never before. That independence now had to be defined and analyzed in economic and political as well as aesthetic and technological terms. Yet despite the sometimes perceptive analyses of such writers as Clair, Moussinac, Altman, Fondane, and others, there was surprisingly little theorizing about the specific models for such an independent cinema—whether it should depend on amateur groups (as in the ciné-club movement), on cooperative *équipes* or companies within the film industry, on state agencies, on political parties, or on workers' organizations. Theoretical and speculative work flourished on the possible forms and functions of the new sound film—for instance, Epstein and Fondane's insistence on explorations in audio recording and relations between image and sound; Clair and Pagnol's debate over the value of theater-films, adaptations, and original film narratives; the Surrealist and Grand Jeu writers' belief in the cinema's power, respectively, either to constitute or unleash the forces and processes of the unconscious or to express a primordial, almost mythic consciousness (the latter somewhat disturbing in its intersection with fascist ideology); Altman and Carné's advocacy of a proletarian or populist narrative cinema; and Vigo and Ivens's defense of socially committed documentary films. Yet much of this work took place in specialized literary and intellectual magazines as well as in film journals, and a good deal remained cut off from realization in actual film practice. In the end, however, for all of the reiterations of the past, the hesitations, and the theoretical positionings sometimes severed from practice, these texts still provided a firm basis at least for the work associated with poetic realism and the Popular Front cinema of the later 1930s as well as for Bazin's early writings in the 1940s.

from What Is Cinema?, André Bazin. Vol. 2. Berkeley + Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1971. Transl. Hugh Gray

THE DESTINY OF JEAN GABIN

THE FILM star is not just an actor, not even an actor particularly beloved of the public, but a hero of legend or tragedy, embodying a destiny with which scenarists and directors must comply—albeit unwittingly. Otherwise the spell between the actor and his public will be broken. The variety of films in which he appears, and which seem so agreeably surprising in their novelty, should not mislead us. It is the confirmation of a destiny, profound and essential, which we unconsciously seek in the actor's continually renewed exploits. This is evident in Chaplin, for example, and, interestingly enough, more secretly and subtly illustrated in a star like Jean Gabin.

In nearly all Gabin films—at least from *La Bête humaine* to *Au-delà des grilles*—he comes to a violent end that has the appearance, more or less, of suicide. Is it not strange that the commercial law of the happy ending, which forces so many producers to tack on artificial finales like those of the Molière comedies, is not valid for one of the most popular and sympathetic actors—whom everyone should wish to see happily married with lots of children?

But can you see Gabin as a family man? Could anyone imagine that, at the end of *Quai des Brumes,* he had managed to snatch poor Michèle Morgan from the clutches of Michel Simon and Pierre Brasseur, and sailed with her to a future in America; or that, having come to his senses, he

preferred when day broke in *Le Jour se lève* to turn himself in and hope for a probable acquittal?

No, it is impossible. The public that swallows many affronts would undoubtedly feel that they were being taken for a ride if screenwriters presented them with a happy ending for Jean Gabin.

Proof by a *reductio ad absurdum*: let someone try to kill off Luis Mariano or Tino Rossi in the same fashion!

How can we explain this paradox, all the more glaring because it contradicts an inviolable law of the cinema? The explanation is that Gabin, in the films referred to, is not just giving an interpretation of one story among many others. It is always the same story—his own, and one which must inevitably end unhappily, like the story of Oedipus or Phaedra. Gabin is the tragic hero of the contemporary cinema. With every new Gabin film the cinema rewinds the infernal machine of his destiny—just as in *Le Jour se lève,* that night, as on every night, he winds up the alarm clock whose ironic and cruel ringing will sound at daybreak the hour of his death.

It would be a simple matter to show how, under cover of an ingenious diversity, the essential gears of the mechanism remain identically the same. Here is one example. Before the war, it is said, Gabin insisted before signing any film contract that the story include one of those explosive scenes of anger at which he excels. Was this the whim of a star, was it the ham clinging to his little touch of bravura? Perhaps, but he probably felt, through his actor's vanity, that to deprive himself of it would betray his character. Indeed it is almost always in a moment of rage that Gabin brings misfortune on himself, baiting the fateful trap that will inevitably cause his death. Besides, in the tragedies and epics of ancient times anger was not just a psychological state amenable to treatment by a cold shower or a sedative; it was a special state, a divine possession, an opening for the gods into the world of humanity, through which destiny steals. Thus in a gesture of rage Oedipus on the road to Thebes brought misfortune upon himself by killing a charioteer (his father) whom he did not recognize. The modern gods who reign over suburban Thebes with their Olympus of factories and their steel monsters wait too for Gabin at the crossroads of fate.

What I have said holds good more for the prewar Gabin of *La Bête*

humaine and *Le Jour se lève*. Gabin has changed since then; he is older, his formerly blond hair is gray, his face has grown fatter. In the cinema, we used to say, destiny does not take on a countenance, it is the countenance that reveals its destiny. Gabin could not remain the same forever; but neither could he escape from a mythology that is so solidly established.

And thus, significantly, Aurenche and Bost in *Au-delà des grilles* have taken over where Jeanson and Prevért left off. We remember the last shot of *Pépé le Moko*: the dying Gabin clinging to the iron railings around Algiers harbor, watching the ship that carries all his hopes sail away. René Clément's film begins where Duvivier's ended. Its titles might save said, "Suppose Gabin had been given a chance—he could have caught the boat; here he is now, on the other side of the railings." The film is simply Gabin's return to his fate, the quasi-voluntary renunciation of love and happiness, the admission that a paroxysm of toothache and the gods, when all is said and done, are the strongest forces in life.

Admittedly in *La Marie du Port* the force of destiny is softened. Gabin becomes merely an actor again. For the first time, he gets married—but will he be any happier? Marcel Carné has not been able to escape paying his dues to the old myth. Gabin is rich, he is a "success"—nevertheless, throughout the film there is talk of a ship in dry dock, or a trawler that never sets sail, and is there like a witness to the old dream Gabin never achieved (the dream of an escape he could never make, a parting that would set him free). Thus his present dubious happiness, his material rather than moral success, is nothing more than a confession of failure, the paltry reward of an act of renunciation. The gods are merciful to those who no longer seek to be heroes.

It remains for the sociologists and moralists (specifically the Christian moralists—and why not the theologians?) to reflect on the profound meaning of a mythology in which, through the popularity of an actor like Gabin, millions of our contemporaries rediscover themselves. Perhaps a world without God becomes a world of the gods and of the fates they dispense.

SOURCES AND TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

AN AESTHETIC OF REALITY: NEOREALISM (CINEMATIC REALISM AND THE ITALIAN SCHOOL OF THE LIBERATION)

From *Esprit*, January, 1948

P. 17, Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.
This school was founded in 1935 under Mussolini. The Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques was founded in Paris in 1943.

P. 21, Beaumarchais (1732–1799).
Author of *The Barber of Seville* and *Figaro*, the latter revealing Beaumarchais' capacity for witty and satirical criticism of French society during the last days of the *ancien régime*. On the eve of World War II Jean Renoir consciously and successfully paralleled Beaumarchais in *La Règle du jeu*.

P. 22, Anna Magnani.
Originally a popular singer in Rome's Trastevere, the equivalent of Montmartre in Paris or of Cockney London.

P. 26, expressionist heresy.
Heresy because it does not reflect reality as cinema should. It is curious

1962 *Le Caporal épinglé* (*The Elusive Corporal* [UK]; *The Vanishing Corporal* [USA])
1970 *Le Petit théâtre de Jean Renoir* (*The Little Theatre of Jean Renoir*)

Other films cited in the text

La Bandera (*Escape from Yesterday*), Julien Duvivier (1935)
La Belle équipe (*They were Five* [UK]; *A Fine Team* [USA]), Julien Duvivier (1936)
Le Quai des brumes (*Port of Shadows*), Marcel Carné (1938)

French Film: Texts + Contexts
eds. Susan Hayward +
Ginette Vincendeau
2nd. edition
London + NY: Routledge, 2000.

4

POETIC REALISM AS PSYCHOANALYTICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL OPERATION

Marcel Carné's *Le Jour se lève* (1939)

Maureen Turim

Method of inquiry

Released two years after the demise of the Popular Front and just three months before the entry of France into war with Germany, Marcel Carné's *Le Jour se lève*, from a script by Jacques Viot with dialogues by Jacques Prévert,[1] is a film that more than most suffered from the way contextual factors apparently affected its reception in 1939. It was seen by some critics as a renunciation of the ideals of the Popular Front.[2] Then it was in fact banned by the military censor board as too 'defeatist'.[3] Judging the film from their racist, fascist ideological bias, Bardèche and Brasillach decried the 'judaïzing aesthetic' of *Le Jour se lève* which they compared to the German cinema before 1933.[4] It was not until ten years after its original release that the film's reputation was redeemed (partially owing to the efforts of André Bazin),[5] once it could be seen, not necessarily outside of the context of the late 1930s upheavals, but with more distance on the threat its tone implied to diverse groups at that time.

From our position of retrospection, there are many possible readings of the gloomy poetics of a film like *Le Jour se lève*, slightly different from the 1930s critiques, but using the same sort of symbolic approach: as an expression of the mood of despair after the collapse of the Popular Front on the eve of the Second World War; as the migration into French culture of Nietzschean philosophy; or as Carné and Prévert's personal fascination with and reworking of the US gangster film of the 1930s. All of these have some validity, and the historical thesis is particularly intriguing given the marked difference between the films from the end of the 1930s and those from earlier in the decade. What we will see, however, is that in addition to these readings *Le Jour se lève* prefigures the psychoanalytic narrative economy of the 1940s

melodrama and *film noir*[6] in its configuration of a compulsive desire forcing repetitions that can be stopped only with death.

In the discussion that follows, I would like to continue the process of historical re-evaluation initiated by Bazin by proposing an analysis whose method takes into account polysemy, a weave of conflicting meanings, rather than unity of meaning and symbolism. Such a method considers the complexities of intertextuality and ideology in relationship to the multiplicity of meanings a film generates on several levels including psychoanalytical and deconstructive readings. This differs from symptomatic readings in which a given interpretation is said to reflect an assumed prevailing mood.

In the case of *Le Jour se lève*, symptomatic readings tend to emphasize the pessimism and fatalism dominant in the film. Such readings are largely thematic and tend to take these attitudes, as represented in the film, as the meaning of the film itself. If a working-class character or a Frenchman (the two ways of characterizing the hero pertinent to the 1930s critiques mentioned above) is shown to be driven to self-destruction, then the film is somehow seen as not offering the proper inspiration for class struggle or nationalist resistance or nationalist fascist collaboration, as the case may be. However, fictional suicides can also be part of a statement of protest or desperation. Two suicides from the 1930s, that of a friend of the Préverts, the surrealist Pierre Batcheff in 1931, and that of socialist Roger Salengro in 1937, Ministre de l'Intérieur under Léon Blum, were in fact seen at the time as just such acts of protest; Salengro's suicide was a major rallying point for the Popular Front, as he was perceived as having been driven to it by his political opponents. Further, if we allow that *Le Jour se lève* is more complex in its use of character than such thematic interpretation admits, the pessimism located within a character or within the trajectory of a character's life need not be taken as the singular 'message' of the film.

Instead, we can see how the film depicts characters whose desires and impulses are positioned as networks of conflicting forces. The tension is not only between characters representing different elements but within characters, with the protagonist, François (Jean Gabin), providing a central focus of this network. Ginette Vincendeau has analysed how characters played by Jean Gabin figure in the political imagination of the 1930s;[7] François, as one of the late incarnations of a continuing series of like personae, clearly does embody a mythic hero who, while marked as coming from the working class, rarely simply represents a typical constituent of it (his role in *La Grande illusion* is perhaps his most positive and also most typed working-class embodiment). Instead, this hero tends to represent the troubled aspect of a subject whose desires are poetically magnified as outside of control or compromise. The death act then takes a structural place in the narrative as a refusal of suffering and the danger of being further misunderstood or manipulated, as well as presenting psychic volatility as marking the construction of this hero.

As we shall see, this suicidal hero can be seen in relationship to a discourse on memory and the viewing of the past. The hero's focalization of his past serves the film's psychoanalytic unveiling, not merely at the level of psychology of character, but as meta-psychology. The social determination of this character then needs to be construed as an element in relationship to these other operations, symbolically inseparable from them. To retain the weight of an historical context while pursuing a process of reading beyond a symptomatic thematic interpretation into the psychoanalytical narrative economy – that is the goal of what follows.

Double time and associative memory objects

In *Le Jour se lève* knowledge of the murder is first given the audience as an intertitle prefacing the frame story, one that was in fact added at the insistence of the producer to clarify the structure for the audience: 'A man has killed. Shut up and besieged in his room, he evokes the circumstances which made of him a murderer.'[8] The frame story then opens with the gunshot we hear, but do not see; the vision of the act of murder itself is withheld until the end of the final flashback. The frame story chronicles the degeneration of the hero's mood through the night towards dawn. The three flashbacks are offered within this frame as the subjective thoughts of this man, described as 'besieged by memories'. The flashbacks are 'causal' segments whose internal temporal structure is a linear progression narrating the jealousy, betrayal and villainous taunting that turns the promise of an ideal romance sour. Like many flashback films, the structure here reverses the cause and effect order, giving us the effect, murder, first, and the cause, an overwhelming psychic tension, following that. In a sense the past is offered to the audience as explanation and justification, though, due to this trope of interior thought, the narrative does not present itself as a courtroom trial, not even indirectly, as does the other famous 1930s French flashback film co-authored by Prévert and directed by Jean Renoir, *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*. In fact, as the film progresses, the hero rejects the crowd's sympathy for him, misreading it as a perverse fascination, and will not acknowledge his friends who urge him to surrender in order to be given a real trial. Rather than directly appeal to the audience's judgement, *Le Jour se lève* shows us a man who rejects anyone who tries to help or understand him. It problematizes judgement before the inner workings of a psyche, but, paradoxically, it encourages our sympathy by proposing to show us how psychic tension can reach such an explosive level.

This double temporal organization of the film makes possible fascinating object associations which link the present to the past. These object associations are both an application of a notion of associative memory and a particular inscription of the object symbolism typical of Poetic Realism. The

objects that will circulate through other segments, the mirror, the teddy bear and the brooch, are introduced within the first flashback. The scene of their introduction occurs three weeks after the hero's initial meeting with the young florist's assistant, Françoise, with whom he falls in love. He visits her in her room where, in the course of their flirtation, he holds her teddy bear next to his face as he looks in the mirror. This gesture marks his contemplation of Françoise's suggestion that the toy bear and he look alike, both have 'one happy eye and one sad'. The bear becomes a symbol of the ideal of happiness and the melancholy of defeat that coexist in François, and it is this bear that he takes with him upon being sexually rebuffed that evening. The taking of this souvenir, this emblem of himself as consolation, is a way in which the film marks its forces of narrative determination.

In the next return to the present, François repeats the gesture, the look in the mirror while holding a teddy bear, that he made in Françoise's room. The migration of this gesture from flashback to present gives us memory as a repetition of gestures and objects, doubling the sense of over-determination already located in the bear.

The brooch also makes its first appearance in Françoise's room, as one of the objects she puts on before leaving for her mysterious late night rendezvous. The brooch figures in the complicated psychological torture Valentin devises for François in which he uses Clara's jealousy of Françoise to extract his revenge. Clara explains that the brooch signifies Valentin's sexual conquest of a new woman, that is, Françoise, and she now gives one like it to François as a souvenir of their affair which he has just ended. The brooch then serves as the visual symbol that will bridge the next transition between past and present. The brooch gets thrown by François at the *armoire* in the transitional shot that brings us back to the present.

The brooch inspires an on-going discourse on the relationship between objects and memory that thematizes the associative memory-links the film makes in its flashback structure. This is especially developed in the *double-entendre* in the French word *souvenir* (which means both a memory and a memento), which is developed in the dialogue between François and Clara. This word-play reminds us of how objects become invested with memories, for in Prévert's poetic condensation of *souvenir*, objects and memories are inseparable.

Objects are charged with meanings by the film and their recurrence is a key to the structure of the narrative. This circulation of symbolic objects can also be seen as forming the psychoanalytic narrative economy of the film. The objects provide a metaphorical rendering of imagination and the psyche in relationship to death. The room itself embodies the restriction of freedom through a limitation and closure of space. The response to this restriction is a withdrawal, an interiorization which has as its slogan François' shouts of 'Fous-moi la paix' and 'Fichez-moi la paix' ('leave me alone', but also 'give me some peace'). The window, mirror, door and *armoire* become symbolically

rich elements of this architectonic shell. François' barricade against the world is destroyed element by element, first the shattering of the window, then François' breaking of the mirror which fragments his self-image, then the penetration of bullets through the door and then the *armoire* placed in front of it. The final penetration of his space, the ominous explosion of the tear gas occurs in ironic excess of good reason, as it explodes next to his corpse, yet reason enough exists in its imagistic purpose as this 'senseless' explosion, this puff of smoke, fills the space of the dead hero, underscoring the end of the *homme-récit*, the narrative process bound by the course of a fictional life.[9]

Let us take another look at how François' movement in the long take that begins the first return to the present links this shattered window with the mirror, which in turn will be shattered in a later sequence. As window and mirror are both frequent metaphors for cinema itself (for example, Bazin's 'window on the world'[10] and the widespread notion of cinema as mirror of society, the psyche or the author) these images gain meta-cinematic, theoretical signification. They place the character in the film as trapped not only by his temporal frame (the frame story) but by his cinematic frame (the image, its architectonics, its means of symbolization). The despair and the fatalism are not only pertaining to the social references, the failure of the Popular Front, they have permeated the language of expression, the controlling metaphors of the cinematic medium.

If these architectural elements become indicators of withdrawal, restriction and annihilation of the self in the present siege of the room, in the flashback past they had been imbued with other meanings. For example, the *armoire* shifts from being a treasure chest whose interior is decorated with photos of Françoise to being François' armour, shielding him from the police. The film plays on the near homonyms, *armoire, amour, armure* (chest, love, armour) visually and verbally.[11] Consider the dialogue between the commissaire of police and the concierge:

LE COMMISSAIRE: Dites donc. . . .' Est-ce qu'il y a une armoire dans cette chambre? (Say. . . . Is there a chest in that room?)
LE CONCIERGE: Comment? (What?)
LE COMMISSAIRE: Je vous demande s'il y a une armoire dans sa chambre? (I'm asking you if there is a chest in his room?)
LE CONCIERGE: Naturellement, il y a une armoire. (Naturally, there is a chest.)
LE COMMISSAIRE: Une grande armoire . . . ? (A large chest?)
LE CONCIERGE: Une grande armoire? . . . j'sais pas, moi! . . . Une armoire comme toutes les armoires . . . (A large chest? I don't know . . . a chest like all the others . . .)

This dialogue calls attention to itself through obsessive repetitions, then begs for the substitution of *amour* for *armoire* in the phrase *une grande armoire*,

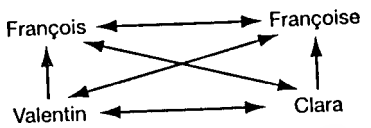
especially when this is further modified by the concierge's answer. In this transposition, François' love, so obsessive as to be self-destructive, is said to be in fact like all other loves; in the transposition with armour, love, which once seemed an escape from an oppressive world, becomes an ineffective shield from a hostile one.

The exchange and contrast between the meanings objects had in the past and the ones they acquire in this new context of the present is so constant as to become an obsessive characteristic of the text. For example, when the bullet causes the door of the *armoire* to swing open, revealing the photos in the present, François slams it shut again, a metaphor for his attempt to not remember, which none the less triggers the next flashback. Each of the objects represents in microcosm this difference between two states of being, one in which there are restrictions, but also dreams and hope for change, and one in which hope is lost and death is inevitable. Objects also permit dialogues to be spun around them poetically, and here Prévert displays his similarity to his contemporary, Francis Ponge, in using the object as the basis for an ironic series of philosophical speculations.[12]

The recurrences of these objects also operate abstractly to engage structures of repetition and return. These structures contribute to the fatalism of the film, a film in which the past and the present join on the 'seam' of the murder, and once the murder is regained across this temporal fold, the suicide follows. Are we 'beyond the pleasure principle'? Is this film, sructured by deaths, an ode to the death drive?

Melodrama: the hero, the villain and the two women

The answer to these questions must be postponed until we take another entrance into *Le Jour se lève*, the consideration of the melodramatic aspects of this narrative. French theatrical melodrama is an important intertextual force throughout the history of French film.[13] This is particularly evident in the collaborative work of Carné and Prévert, including *Jenny, Le Quai des brumes*, and *Les Enfants du paradis* as well as *Le Jour se lève* and Carné's *Hôtel du Nord* from a scenario by Henri Jeanson and Jean Aurenche. *Les Enfants du paradis* even thematizes this melodramatic proclivity on the part of Prévert and Carné by drawing directly on the life of Frédérick Lemaître and the Boulevard du Crime setting.[14] Although several of the films cited above do have novelistic rather than theatrical sources, these novels themselves are marked by the nineteenth-century theatrical melodrama.[15] Like other French films of the 1930s, *Le Jour se lève* concentrates on the male hero as central focus whereas melodramatic films of the 1920s were more likely to make the female central (*Jenny* is one of the exceptions, with its 1930s female focus). If the hero is central through his focalization, the melodrama develops a network of desire and rivalry that contains four principals, which can be diagrammed as follows:



This diagram allows us to see the doubling of the couples and the crossing of the lines of desire. Above we have the hero and heroine, the couple of apparent charmed likeness, François and Françoise, who, except for the 'e', the signifier of sexual difference, share a name, a saint's day and memories of childhoods as orphans. Below, the couple meet at the point of rupture, the villain and the other woman. As close as it comes in many respects, this is not simply the melodramatic tale of the contamination of pure love by the impure. A look at each of the four characterizations will help show why.

If our hero is complexly drawn, this complexity is an amplification, through traits that construct a character psychology, of the traditional melodramatic hero. He is, on a more basic level, beneath all the elaboration of his subjective vision and his psyche, the romantic lead in a tale of morality, attempting to secure for himself and his love object an ideal life together. Valentin is a pure melodramatic villain, a cruel ringmaster who treats others in the melodrama like the dogs he trains for his *café-concert* act.

If the hero and villain follow the generic pattern of melodrama, the two women are harder to categorize. Françoise 'should' be the ideal innocent heroine and Clara, the other, fallen, woman, but here is where the film performs some of its most interesting play with character. The first flashback introduces both women, placing them in parallel roles in the working-class and marginal *café-concert* milieu of the film. The contrasts that melodrama might impose between them (a good/bad woman split) are mediated in a number of ways.

First, the opposition between the heroine and the other woman is modified by Françoise being far more worldly and far less innocent (in her attraction to Valentin) than she initially appears to François when he is interrupted at work by her confused attempt to deliver her flowers. Her chance appearance at his factory bearing azaleas on their mutual saint's day which begins his infatuation is painted as an array of symbols. In the protective suit of a sandblaster, François takes on the almost surreal appearance of the modern industrialized man, while Françoise appears as an ideal vision, innocence bedecked with flowers. The ideal image is destroyed soon thereafter, when François follows Françoise on her late night sortie to a *café-concert* where he discovers that she is enraptured by a rival, Valentin. François judges Valentin by watching the act, as does the audience; Jules Berry's exaggerated performative gestures as Valentin present him as self-aggrandizing and belittling others (Clara and the dogs who are presented by him as puppets rather than as intelligent performers).

Le Jour se lève – François (Jean Gabin).

The triangle (hero–innocent–villain) is doubled when François begins talking with Clara (Arletty), Valentin's co-performer and mistress who has just walked out on him. Clara's saucy rejection of Valentin, her refusal to continue to perform with/for him, given first as a flippant gesture, the purposeful missing of her cue to catch his top hat, aligns her with François' sensibilities, his distaste for Valentin's pseudo-elegance. François and Clara demonstrate from their initial meeting onward that indeed they speak the same language, a language without pretences at being anything other than what they are. The flashback ends with a confrontation between Valentin and François, not over Françoise, but over Clara. This uneasy substitution of Clara for Françoise continues throughout the next flashback.

If Clara's substitution for Françoise is a temporary compromise on François' part within the diegesis, it accrues a different reaction from most spectators. Arletty is so dynamic a performer in the role of Clara, and so winning not only in her independence, but also once she softens to admit her love of François, that it is actually difficult to accept emotionally the logic of the narrative by which François must break off with her to return to his doomed idealization, his infatuation with Françoise. We can analyse

Le Jour se lève – view of building where François (Jean Gabin) lives.

this intuitive discomfort not only in terms of a casting imbalance (the comparative weakness of Jacqueline Laurent's performance) that undercuts narrative determinations, but also as a longing, ultimately suppressed by the film, to step outside the overdetermination of the death drive as guarantor of narrative closure. The initial encounter between Clara and François at the bar of the *café-concert* is characterized by a revitalization of the romantic exchange of glances as a female-initiated sardonic volley. For example, in response to François' assertion that with all her make-up he cannot know if she is pretty, Clara, nonplussed, replies 'Make-up? I always take it off before I go to bed.' The film flirts with allowing a proletarian couple to evade the frame of pessimism of late 1930s French melodrama and reconstitute their lives on terms that offer a class-conscious, if personalized, alternative.

The glimmer of such an alternative is often suggested in the film, in ways that the dominant readings often ignore. We can understand this in terms of the affinities established between the two women that efface their opposition. Both women are presented as workers; though Clara is a performer, her job in the act is parallel to Françoise's role as service assistant to the florist. Discussions of representations of the working class in 1930s films tend to ignore

such representations of the female work force, focusing exclusively on the male factory worker.[16] Yet it is significant that, despite the romantic rivalry that will make them opponents, a solidarity between them, at least on Clara's part, will ultimately surface in the narrative. This occurs in the scenes surrounding the final flashback, when, in the present, Françoise shows up on the street below François' room in a state of hysterical delirium. It is Clara who takes Françoise away to comfort her, bringing Françoise to her room, and listens sympathetically while she rants of her love for François and, ironically, the insignificance of his tryst with Clara.

Clara and Françoise are also linked to the male workers, the comrades of François who form a kind of Greek chorus commenting on the action from their position beneath François' window. Unlike the bourgeoisie who assume a criminal or insane identity for François because he has committed a murder, the working-class representatives imagine that he must have had good reasons, that the killing was justifiable, something that Clara and Françoise know first-hand. Here the film joins the logic of *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*, where the collective knows Lange's murder of Batala (also played by Berry) to be justifiable, and Lange's woman friend is able to communicate this to a group of strangers, also proletarians, whose sympathetic understanding and collaboration is attained at the film's end. If Prévert retells his *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* in far less optimistic terms in *Le Jour se lève*, the traces of the earlier film's class awareness remain in this retelling.

Indeed, *Le Jour se lève* goes further than *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* in its effort to depart from moral absolutes and either a happy or a retributive resolution. It is not just a more pessimistic film, but one less certain that the moral oppositions of early melodrama can serve a leftist ideological framework for narrative. Instead, the elements of melodramatic form are inscribed with considerable tension and reworking. If the villain remains a consummate villain, the hero, due to the complexities of his psyche, cannot simply defeat the villain without defeating himself, while the heroine and the other woman overlap rather than forming a neat opposition. The lines between self and other, so fixed in melodrama's character types, are here more ambiguous. The reason for this ambiguity is not just a greater political scepticism at the end of the 1930s, although that certainly plays a role, but a more subjective and intersubjective view of narrative.

The questions about the death drive with which the second section of this essay ended can now be reframed by this conclusion. We can see that the film's concern with subjectivity and intersubjectivity, especially as articulated through the depiction of memory, lends itself to this tendency towards a romance of the death drive. Pleasure, imagined as a bicycle ride to pick lilac by François or as a stay on the Côte d'Azur among the mimosas by Françoise, is always deferred and unattainable; identifying with bourgeois dreams will certainly not bring happiness, but neither, apparently, will acceptance of

one's proletarian being.[17] The self contains its own debilitating contradictions, and romance with a proletarian existence is dissipated by a harsh look at what François' working conditions mean. The unhealthiness of the sand, the slow death it means to the blasters, the psychological toll the job extracts from François, are motifs introduced in the factory scene (a graphic image of work in a factory rare in this period of French film) and repeated throughout the film.

The murder and suicide which bring together the two temporalities at the end of the film join the other ironies developed earlier. For ultimately, when the final flashback unfolds, we learn, despite the film's seeming to present us with causes, that there is no reason for François to kill Valentin; Françoise has already pledged her love to François, and it is only through Valentin's goading François into shooting him that the young couple's future is foreclosed. François explodes irrationally in what amounts to a nervous breakdown. This is not just Gabin's famous short tempered scene of anger that is replayed from film to film, although it does culminate the development of that image.[18] François is a character who has unravelled.

The dual temporality of the film can be seen as the piecing together across past and present of this unravelled psyche we come to inevitably in the end. François' psyche is not just the subject of this interlacing of past and present, but is defined by the weave of retrospective linkages evoked in the film's imagery. Psychic functioning is presented primarily through external elements weighted with symbolic heuristic value. If the working-class hero destroys himself in the end, the film constructs not so much the causes of his behavior but the forces associated with objects and people which rage in a milieu and have no outlet, no place to simply dissipate. Valentin resurfaces to accomplish, through his provoked murder, the foreclosure of the promise of and nostalgia for peace and happiness in quite the same manner in which the brooch reappears. The torment of the inherently evil recurring object is a figuration of psychic temporality itself, non-linear and repetitious, a circulation of forces.[19]

Realism, poetry and memory

In his article on *Le Jour se lève*, Bazin speaks of the realism of Alexander Trauner's sets, all built for studio production, crediting the great designer with the detailed touches that make the images of this film seem, in Bazin's view, like such an accurate 'social documentary'.[20] Yet Bazin also notes how Trauner has composed this little square in a working-class suburb 'as a painter would his canvas', and remarks continually on the dramatic role of the decor in the film, comparing it with Fritz Lang's *M*, while contrasting it with other works of German Expressionism.[21] If an element of contradiction appears to open up here in Bazin's insistence on social documentary on one hand, and poetic function on the other, this leads to his direct theoretical

assessment of Poetic Realism. He argues that Trauner and Carné have infused this reality with poetry, and he praises Poetic Realism for founding its metaphors and symbolism, what he terms its 'metaphysical' signification, in the accurate depiction of a milieu.

We might well ask, however, if the textual strategy of Poetic Realism can any longer simply be seen in such terms. Recent work on the theory of realism in painting, literature and film demands a greater critical distance on the apparently real created through a weave of metonymic detail. We can recast Bazin's argument by acknowledging how the film's sets use metonymic elements as devices in which the codes of realism and analogy serve the codes of metaphor and the self-consciously poetic. Such incredulity before the real is all the more appropriate when looking at a film that renders the world as composed of metaphors. Poetics of the sort pursued by this film formulate a rhetoric that is quite different from a controlled documentation of the social. While Trauner (and the Carné–Prévert team in general), may have set out to recreate in the space of the studio a corner of a working-class suburb, such descriptive mimesis immediately becomes appropriated by the symbolic structuration and interior vision of this film. We should not let our desire to know the interior of a factory or a *café-concert* in 1939 let us substitute the image given to us in this film for that reality.

By extension, we should not allow our desire to know the interior life of a working-class man to permit us to substitute this film's treatment of memory and interiority for that which escapes our gaze. The images of the past the film gives us as François' memory are less like memory processes than the images of memories in the silent 1920s films of Louis Delluc, Germaine Dulac and Abel Gance. Here the only imagistic trope of memory is associative recall, the seeing of an object triggering the recall of a memory associated with that object. Even this device is presented less as part of a mimesis of memory *per se* than as part of the network of object symbolism and circulation discussed earlier. Perhaps unconsciously, the film marks in its treatment of memory its lack of concern with documenting the memory process; memory appears to be of interest as a dramatic trope, subjected to the discipline of the film's poetics rather than truly constructing the text.

In Poetic Realism, then, the accent is on poesis, on the trope deployed strategically, framed in a manner that sparkles with a simultaneous sense of design and imaginative play of thought and language. To move ever further into such poetics when the political climate chills in the way it did in 1939 is finally a quite comprehensible response on the part of artists who cared deeply about the working class their fictions represented. It is a response that sees fiction and the reality that is its context as complexly interactive. François' outrage and self-destruction are perhaps a displacement on to the working class of the self-portrait of the poets themselves.

Notes

1 The question of authorship of this film (who is responsible for what) is not really my focus here. We know the film to be a collective effort, benefiting from the combined talents of a group who worked together repeatedly. While many discussions of the film assign a certain quality of the contribution to Viot, Carné, Prévert, Trauner, Maurice Jaubert, the actors and actresses, they tend to do so without any historical documentation of the process involved. For my purposes here, I am quite willing to accept that the work is a group project in which each of these strong personalities and talents interacted. At the end of the chapter, when I speak of 'the poets' I am referring to this collectivity.

2 Geneviève Guillaume-Grimaud (1986) *Le Cinéma du Front Populaire*, Paris, Lherminier.

3 Gérard Guillot (1966), *Les Prévert*, Paris, Seghers. The same source also says that later 'Vichy authorities held *Le Quai des brumes* accountable for the defeat of France before the Nazi regime'.

4 Maurice Bardèche and Robert Brasillach (1948), *Histoire du cinéma*, Paris, Martel, as quoted in *Avant-scène cinéma* 53 (1965). The anti-Semitism here seems aimed at Jacques Prévert.

5 André Bazin (1963), 'Fiche du *Jour se lève*', originally distributed as a leaflet at ciné-club presentations of the film, published in Jacques Chevallier (ed.) *Regards neufs sur le cinéma*, Paris, Seuil. Reprinted as part of the chapter 'Marcel Carné' in André Bazin (1983) *Le Cinéma français de la Libération à la Nouvelle Vague (1945–1958)*, Paris, Editions de L'Etoile, 53–69. John Mathews's (1970) English translation of extracts of Bazin's article appears in the 'Classic Film Scripts' translation of the script of *Le Jour se lève*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 5–12.

6 The pessimistic atmosphere, which has structural determinants in the film, is a strong prefiguration of the structure and tone of the American *film noir* flashback. *Le Jour se lève* did open in New York, under the tide *Daybreak*, but to less than completely enthusiastic reviews. A remake, *The Long Night*, Litvak, 1947, starring Henry Fonda, Barbara Bel Geddes, Ann Dvorak and Vincent Price, attests to the interest in *Le Jour se lève* by an émigré director known for *film noir* at the beginning of the peak period of production of this genre of film. Taken together these facts suggest that the film was perhaps historically influential in the development of American *film noir*. Even if this were not the case, however, a comparison of structure between *Le Jour se lève* and the *noir* genre would still prove intriguing.

7 Ginette Vincendeau (1985), 'Community, Nostalgia and the Spectacle of Masculinity: Jean Gabin in Two Films Made During the Period of the Popular Front', *Screen* 26 (6).

8 This and all other dialogue citations are taken from the script published in *Avant-scène cinéma, 53 (1965).*

9 Tzvetan Todorov (1971) *Poétique de la prose*, Paris, Seuil, 78–91.

10 André Bazin (1971) *What Is Cinema?* trans. Hugh Grey, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 111. It is also worth noting in the context of this analysis of *Le Jour se lève* that Bazin's use of the metaphor is in the context of a contrast drawn between theatre and film: 'we see that the basic aesthetic problem or filmed theater is indeed that of decor. The trump card that the director must hold is the reconversion in a window on to the world of a space oriented toward an interior dimension only, namely the closed and conventional area of the theatrical play.' Bazin's article on *Le Jour se lève* praises the film's use of windows and mirrors which I develop more thoroughly here.

11 Admittedly, the treatment of plays on words and objects that I analyse here

moves slightly beyond what is actually given in the text; it constitutes a reading between lines and images. I believe, however, that Prévert's work with wordplay and object symbolism in his poetry and film scripts (most notably for the poetry, *Paroles*, and for the film, *Un Oiseau rare* (1934), in which a parrot devises advertising slogans) justifies this play on my part, which at any rate in the context of the contemporary critical methods of Jacques Derrida or Jacques Lacan does not necessarily require such historical and intertextual evidence.

12 Francis Ponge (1942) *Le Parti pris des choses*, Paris, NRF.
13 See my discussion of this intertextuality in silent French cinema in Turim (1987) 'French Melodrama: A Theory of a Specific History', *Theater Journal* (fall).
14 See discussion of the melodramatic heritage of this film in Marcel Oms (1979) '*Les Enfants du paradis* ou la mutation cinématographique du mélodrame', *Cahiers de la cinémathèque*, 28, 141–8.
15 A point Peter Brooks (1976) makes in generalizing about the nineteenth-century French novel in his *The Melodramatic Imagination*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press.
16 As does François Garçon (1984) in his section 'Images de l'ouvrier à l'écran', *De Blum à Pétain*, Paris, Editions du Cerf, 53–7.
17 Ginette Vincendeau has brought to my attention that this desire to identify with bourgeois dreams is a theme in French popular songs of the 1930s as in *Tout change dans la vie*, sung by Fréhel, where visions of the Côte d'Azur are opposed (albeit ironically) to the dreariness of everyday life on the *zone*. Similarly, flowers, and in particular lilacs, are a recurrent motif of the working-class version of the pastoral offered by popular songs, as in *Entre Saint-Ouen et Clignancourt*, an early Piaf song.
18 Bazin (1963), 70.
19 Let me suggest that this analysis differs markedly from that offered by Gilles Deleuze (1985) in *L'Image-temps*, Paris, Les Editions de Minuit, 67, in which he argues that the flashback structure in *Le Jour se lève* does nothing more than assure a linear progression. His dismissal is dependent on a reading of the film, derived from Bazin, as using its flashbacks to merely represent the causes of François' behaviour.
20 (1963), 63.
21 (1963), 63.

Selected bibliography

For a selected bibliography on Marcel Carné see Chapter 5, on *Les Enfants du paradis*.

Script

Carné, Marcel and Prévert, Jacques (1965) *Le Jour se lève, Avant-scène cinéma*, 53.

Appendix

Marcel Carné (1909–96): filmography

1929 *Nogent, Eldorado du dimanche* (short)
1936 *Jenny*
1937 *Drôle de drame* (*Bizarre Bizarre*)

1938 *Hôtel du Nord*
1938 *Le Quai des brumes* (*Port of Shadows*)
1939 *Le Jour se lève* (*Daybreak*)
1942 *Les Visiteurs du soir* (*The Devil's Envoys*)
1943–5 *Les Enfants du paradis* (*Children of Paradise*)
1946 *Les Portes de la nuit* (*Gates of the Night*)
1950 *La Marie du port*
1951 *Juliette ou la clef des songes*
1953 *Thérèse Raquin* (*The Adulteress*)
1954 *L'Air de Paris*
1956 *Le Pays d'où je viens*
1958 *Les Tricheurs* (*The Cheaters*)
1960 *Terrain vague*
1963 *Du mouron pour les petits oiseaux*
1965 *Trois chambres à Manhattan*
1968 *Les Jeunes loups* (*The Young Wolves*)
1970 *La Force et le droit*
1971 *Les Assassins de l'ordre*
1974 *La Merveilleuse visite*
1976 *La Bible*
1992 *Mouche*

Other films cited in the text

Le Crime de Monsieur Lange (*The Crime of Monsieur Lange*), Jean Renoir (1935)
La Grande illusion (*Grand Illusion*), Jean Renoir (1938)
M, Fritz Lang (Germany 1931)

Henry Rousso,
The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France Since 1944.
Trans. Arthur Goldhammer.
Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press,
1991. pp. 1-15, 226-240

Appendix 1

Chronology of Events

23 Aug. 1939	Nazi-Soviet pact signed.
1 Sept. 1939	Germany invades Poland.
3 Sept. 1939	Britain, France, Australia, and New Zealand declare war on Germany.
20 Jan. 1940	French parliament bars Communist deputies.
22 March 1940	Paul Reynaud becomes président du Conseil.
10 May 1940	Germany attacks the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg.
19 May 1940	Weygand replaces Gamelin as commander of French armies.
28 May 1940	Belgian army surrenders.
10 June 1940	French government flees Paris.
14 June 1940	Paris surrenders.
16 June 1940	Reynaud resigns, Pétain becomes président du Conseil.
17 June 1940	Pétain announces armistice negotiations with Germany.
18 June 1940	de Gaulle, in London, broadcasts appeal to French nation to continue resistance.
22 June 1940	French-German armistice signed at Rethondes.
28 June 1940	Britain recognizes de Gaulle as leader of Free French.
29 June 1940	Government established in Vichy.
10 July 1940	Pétain granted "full powers" as head of Vichy.
24 Oct. 1940	Hitler and Pétain hold talks at Montoire.
2 June 1944	CFLN declares itself provisional government of French republic.
9 Aug. 1944	Provisional government assumes control of liberated territory.
25 Aug. 1944	Liberation of Paris; de Gaulle marches through city.
11 Nov. 1944	First postwar commemoration under auspices of PCF.
Jan. 1945	Dispute over additions to Pantheon.
10 Jan. 1945	First press reports on death camps.
12 Feb. 1945	Commemoration of 12 February 1934 by PCF.
2 April 1945	Flag Day in honor of French army.

Introduction: The Neurosis

The idea for this book began with a discovery that could have been surprising only to the naive young scholar that I was. In the late 1970s I began research on the history of the Vichy regime, obviously still a subject of heated controversy. Nevertheless, in all innocence, I thought sufficient time had elapsed to allow me to wield my scalpel. But the corpse was still warm. It was too soon for the pathologist to begin an autopsy; what the case called for was a doctor qualified to treat the living, not the dead—perhaps even a psychoanalyst.

What surprised me most was not the passionate reactions—even among historians—to everything written about the "dark years" of the war but the *immediacy* of the period, its astonishing presentness, which at times rose to the level of obsession: witness the constant scandals, the endless invective and insult, the libel suits, and the many affairs that attracted the attention of all of France, such as the trial of Klaus Barbie and the arrest of Paul Touvier. The cultural sphere, moreover, was inundated by images of a troubled yet fascinating past, as during the period of reappraisal I shall call the "forties revival" (*la mode rétro*).

I sensed an urgent need for something more than the usual scholarly approach. Alongside the history of Vichy, another history took shape: the history of the *memory* of Vichy, of Vichy's remnants and fate *after* 1944 and to a date that is still impossible to determine.

Born ten years after the war, I belong to a generation that grew up in the rather burdensome shadow of remembrance and mimickry of May '68. For us there was no "founding event" to rally around, nothing comparable to the Occupation with its pro- and anti-Resistance commitments or the Algerian War or the feverish events of May. Moreover, we of the post-May generation witnessed repeated at-

tempts to overcome those old divisions, the most serious of which were those stemming from the 1940s. Forty years after the fact, many politicians and intellectuals, young as well as old, were still playing at "Phalanges de l'Ordre Noir" [Phalanxes of the Black Order, the title of a well-known comic strip by Christin and Bilal in which former Franco supporters engaged in fanciful battle with former republicans in the 1970s, some forty years after the end of the Spanish Civil War—trans.].

The Field of Memory

Thus subjective factors played a part in my choice of subject. For some years now, historians have been taking an increasing interest in "phenomena of memory." At first glance it would seem that history and memory are two clearly different ways of looking at the past. The difference has frequently been analyzed, most recently by Pierre Nora.[1] Memory is a living phenomenon, something in perpetual evolution, whereas history—as understood by historians—is a scholarly and theoretical reconstruction and as such is more apt to give rise to a substantial, durable body of knowledge. Memory is plural, moreover, in that distinct memories are generated by different social groups, political parties, churches, communities, language groups, and so on. Thus "collective memory" might seem to be a figment of the imagination, or at any rate little more than a misleading composite of disparate and heterogeneous memories. By contrast, history has a more universal, if not more ecumenical, purpose. For all that history may be controversial, it remains a fundamental instrument for the education of citizens. Memory at times lives on in a religious or sacred key; history is critical and secular. Memory is subject to repression, whereas nothing in principle lies outside the historian's territory.

Yet the distinction between history and memory is a characteristic trait of the twentieth century, first identified as such by Maurice Halbwachs, a disciple of Bergson, and exemplified by the evolution of contemporary historiography, whose goal is no longer legitimation but the advancement of knowledge. In the nineteenth century the difference was all but nonexistent, particularly in France. The function of history then, of what Nora has called "history as memory," was essentially to legitimate the nascent Third Republic and to forge a national feeling. Today no such confusion is possible: the disintegration of rural society and of the ancestral traditions it embodied, the proliferation of sources of information and, concomitantly, new approaches to social reality, the weakening of nationalist sentiment in Western Europe since World War II, and the depth of internal divisions including those born of Vichy—all these have caused history and memory to evolve in different directions:

> As "society" has taken the place of "the nation," legitimation based on the past and therefore on history has given way to legitimation based on the future. The past could only be understood and honored, and the nation could only be served; the future, however, must be prepared for. The three terms have regained their autonomy. No longer is the nation something to be fought for; it is a given. History has become a social science, and memory a purely private phenomenon. The "nation as memory" will have been the last incarnation of "history as memory."[2]

Thus a new field of study has been opened up for historians: the history of memory, that is, the study of the evolution of various social practices and, more specifically, of the form and content of social practices whose purpose or effect is the representation of the past and the perpetuation of its memory within a particular group or the society as a whole.

This history is rooted in what Nora and his colleagues have called *lieux de mémoire,* or mnemonic sites, embodying concrete traces of the past, visible and durable signs of its celebration. The history of memory can arise out of the memory of a particular group: the Camisards, for example, as studied by Philippe Joutard,[3] or combat veterans, as studied by Antoine Prost.[4] But it may also be associated with certain key events, whose memory survives long after the last flames have been extinguished and whose influence extends over the whole of society: examples include the French Revolution, of course,[5] the wars in the Vendée that grew out of it and have attracted renewed attention,[6] and World War II.[7] Historians are interested not only in ascertaining the facts about such events but also in comprehending their persistence.

It is no accident that these events were all associated with times of deep crisis for France's national unity and identity. These are the times

that have left the most lasting, most controversial, and most vivid memories—all the more so in that each new crisis has fed upon its predecessors: the Dreyfus Affair on the French Revolution, Vichy on the Dreyfus Affair, the Algerian War on Vichy, and so on. Memories of the past have themselves become components of the crisis, albeit at times of secondary importance.[8]

An "event-oriented" approach is useful in that it allows giving due weight to the tensions involved in any would-be collective representation of the past. Such tensions arise, first of all, among rival social groups, each jealous of its own reconstruction. An ex-POW will not share the same memories as a former partisan or a person deported to a concentration camp. There may also be tensions between such group memories and what might be called the "dominant memory," that is, a collective interpretation of the past that may even come to have official status; here, for example, I am thinking of Gaullist or Communist memory. There may also be tension between, on the one hand, the "voluntarist" memory that builds monuments, decorates graves, and buries heroes and, on the other hand, latent or implicit memory, subject to repression and therefore to slips, lapses, or silences—manifestations of the return of the repressed. For study reveals that, even at the social level, memory is a structuring of forgetfulness.

These same tensions also exist in the writing of history. Whether professional or amateur, the historian is always a product of his own time and place. He stands at a crossroads in the byways of collective memory: on the one hand he, like any other citizen, is influenced by the dominant memory, which may subconsciously suggest interpretations and areas of research; on the other hand, he himself is a "vector of memory" and a carrier of fundamental importance, in that the vision he proposes of the past may, after some delay, exert an influence on contemporary representations.

As a result, the history of the Revolution, Vichy, or the Algerian War cannot really be called universal. Now that history no longer has the purpose of forging a national identity, it has no therapeutic value, and in the short term, at least, it often has the effect of perpetuating old divisions, as a glance at the controversial nature of the so-called *guerre franco-française,* or Franco-French internal war, will show. And of those wars none has been more divisive than the war over Vichy.

Why Vichy?

Krzysztof Pomian writes that "when the time is right, an era of the past may serve as a screen on which new generations can project their contradictions, controversies, and conflicts in objectified form."[9] Something like this seems to have happened in the early 1970s with respect to memories of the Occupation. It has therefore been necessary to return to the source in order to locate those aspects of the event itself that were likely to survive the crisis and resurface once it had passed.

Why have memories of the Occupation (1940–1944) proved so enduring and controversial? The first reason is of course that the tragedy that France suffered in those years was one of unprecedented gravity. The country, already shaken by the events of the 1930s, was subjected within a few short years to a series of terrible blows. The war of 1939–40 was brief but disastrous: some 90,000 French soldiers died, and nearly two million French troops were taken prisoner. Crushing and unexpected military defeat led to a humiliating and ferocious occupation by foreign troops. Metropolitan France was divided into separate zones, and the Empire disintegrated as Vichy and de Gaulle vied for control of its component countries. Within France, civil war attained its peak in 1944 but continued after the Liberation in the form of the so-called *épuration,* or purge of those alleged to have collaborated with the Nazis. Finally, France rejoined the Allied war effort in 1944–45 as it also began to face the problems of economic, political, and moral reconstruction. Such well-known facts scarcely bear repeating except to emphasize that these wrenching events were squeezed into a period roughly equal to the term of a single legislature in peacetime; the French had no time to grasp, come to terms with, and mourn what had befallen them in one catastrophe before they found themselves caught up in yet another. It was under Vichy, and with Vichy, that people first began to take the measure of the defeat, and it was through the purge that the majority of Frenchmen became aware of what the Pétain regime had been.

Furthermore, the fall of France in 1940 undermined an imperial power, a state that appeared to rest on solid underpinnings. In the space of a few weeks, the country's institutions crumbled along with its military, political, and local elites. The normal channels of trade and distribution were suddenly cut off. Authority seemed to have

evaporated somewhere between Paris and Bordeaux: nothing of the kind had ever been seen in the history of a major modern state.

The very name given to the regime that succeeded the Third Republic and administered its coup de grâce focuses attention on this sudden power vacuum. For the new regime was called *l'Etat français*, or French State (as opposed to *la république française*), an appellation that has about it something of a magical incantation. The "state" allegedly created in a casino in Vichy on 10 July 1940 was precisely what was just then crumbling to pieces. *L'Etat français* was from the beginning a nonstate. Its program of internal reconstruction and modernization grew out of this vacuum. As has often been pointed out, the tragedy of Vichy lay in its belief that it could somehow fill the abyss that had suddenly opened up beneath the feet of the French in June 1940, and that it could do so under the watchful eyes of the occupying forces. The people of France, left to their own devices and to the Germans, buffeted between Pétain's reassuring words and the harsh realities of the Occupation, and subject to various authorities all of questionable legitimacy, would long remember the bitter taste of this collapse, much as they would have liked to forget it.

No doubt the crucial feature of the Vichy regime, however, was the large number of internal conflicts that erupted between 1940 and 1944, conflicts that make Vichy the very archetype of the *guerre franco-française*. Already in the 1930s there had been clashes over the nature of the dangers threatening France: some people, especially on the left, saw the principal danger as fascism and Nazism, even within France's own borders; others believed that the chief threat came from the Popular Front and the Communists. The only point these opposing views had in common was their emphasis on the "enemy within," particularly on the right. First the Munich crisis and then the armistice led to a solidification of these positions, although there were of course some who changed sides or views at the last minute. Eventually the line came to be clearly drawn between the Collaboration and the Resistance, groupings diverse in themselves though clearly differentiated.

But this major division masked others that sometimes ran deeper still. Old but never-effaced differences stemming from the Revolution and the Dreyfus Affair resurfaced during the Occupation: the battle against republican institutions, from the constitutional acts to various

clerical proposals made in 1940 and 1941, was a Vichyite obsession, even if the conflict was less bitter than it seemed at the time. Similarly, Vichy's antisemitism, which had concrete, official ramifications in law and justice, was inspired not by Nazism but by French antisemitic traditions.

At the same time, social antagonisms stemming from the events of 1936 erupted with violence. As is well known, the Vichy regime was in many respects—from the organization of production to the abortive Riom trials—a form of revenge against the Popular Front. Not all leading industrialists were collaborators, any more than all workers were members of the Resistance. Nevertheless, awareness of the gulf separating the two sides was sufficiently acute at the time that it gave rise, justifiably or not, to persistent hatreds.

So numerous were these internal divisions that it is not unreasonable to refer to them collectively as a civil war. To some the use of the term may seem shocking: in France there was nothing comparable to what took place in Spain in 1936 or in Greece during and after the war or in Yugoslavia, to say nothing of Germany and Italy. Yet France was a country steeped in a democratic and republican parliamentary tradition, and this was the first time since the Commune that its internecine struggles had taken on so murderous and radical a character.

The Vichy regime and the collaborationists were directly responsible for the imprisonment of 135,000 people, the internment of 70,000 suspects (including numerous political refugees from central Europe), and the dismissal of 35,000 civil servants.[10] As victims of exclusionary laws, 60,000 freemasons were investigated, 6,000 harassed, and 549 (of 989) died in the camps.[11] The French governmental apparatus, together with parties in the pay of the Germans, abetted the deportation of 76,000 French and foreign Jews, fewer than 3 percent of whom survived. They also worked to send 650,000 workers to Germany as conscript labor and waged unremitting battle against the Resistance and all other opponents of the regime. Admittedly, Vichy and the collaborationists were not directly responsible for all the executions, extortions, and deportations. Today, however, there can be no doubt that many victims of the era were claimed not by the foreign occupation or military conflict but by internal struggles in which Vichy figured as the initial issue: this is a fact, not an ideological prejudice.

It is also true that the struggle waged by Free French and resistance forces left bloody traces as well. Roughly 10,000 people were killed without trial or other legal authorization by the Provisional Government; a good half of these summary executions were carried out prior to 6 June 1944 (D-Day), thus *en pleine Occupation*. Of 160,287 cases examined by military and civilian courts, 45 percent ended in dismissal or acquittal, 25 percent in *dégradation nationale* (national dishonor) and loss of civil rights, and 24 percent in prison terms, a third of these being terms at hard labor for a limited period or for life. Finally, 7,037 people were sentenced to death, and perhaps 1500 were actually executed. In addition, the purge of the professions, while not equally thorough or equitable in all sectors of the economy, affected some 150 business executives and managers, some of considerable importance, as well as some 700 educators, to cite just these two figures.[12]

To this total must be added the thousands of deaths resulting from battles in western Africa and Syria between soldiers who remained loyal to Vichy and others who rallied to Free France. In sum, then, the fratricidal struggles of the Occupation were by no means a "cold" or merely "verbal" civil war but a civil war *tout court,* at least when seen within the context of French history. And civil wars have always been the hardest to deal with afterward, for in a foreign war the enemy goes home when hostilities end—in a civil war the "enemy" remains.

These factors stemming from the domestic situation in France were compounded by the general characteristics of World War II. To begin with, it was an ideological war, unlike World War I. In this sense, divisions within France largely overlapped worldwide divisions born of the confrontation between the century's three great political systems: fascism/Nazism, communism, and representative democracy, a confrontation whose echoes would continue to resound long after 8 May 1945 (V-E Day).

Second, the war produced profound upheavals everywhere, including France. The Blitzkrieg of 1940 and the bombings of 1943–1945 demonstrated the power of technology to a panicky population. Most people were obsessed with memories of the trench warfare and wholesale bloodletting of World War I and therefore failed to grasp the

significance of changes in the scale of warfare. But a few did, as General de Gaulle's appeal to the French nation on 18 June 1940 makes clear: "Devastated today by mechanical force, we will be able to conquer in the future by a superior mechanical force: therein hangs the fate of the world." Panic at the collapse of state and society was accompanied by a growing awareness that only a strong state could cope with serious difficulties ranging from economic crisis to war itself, deal with the new technologies, and above all ensure the security of its citizens: such was the inevitable corollary to be drawn from the disorders engendered by these profound changes. The American historian William H. McNeill has even gone so far as to suggest that the "welfare state" was a direct product of the "warfare state."[13]

Finally, after the Armenians, Manchurians, Germans, Russians, Spaniards, and Jews of Europe, the French during the war came face to face with the brutality of the twentieth century: mass terror, concentration camps, the systematic use of death as a political weapon.

But the ubiquitous state, technology, and organized violence are only one side of the coin; the other involves the globalization of trade, the unification of the marketplace, and the convergence of people's outlooks over a large portion of the planet. So it makes sense to claim that to a large extent it was World War II that gave birth to the world as we know it today. The birth occurred not only in pain but in alienation and division. And these circumstances, too, are part of the reason why the French (and others) have had such a difficult time coming to terms with this period of the past.

Why approach the problem by way of Vichy? Why not, for example, ask the same kinds of questions about the remembrance and memory of the Resistance? The Resistance and resistance fighters are of course present in these pages, but whole aspects of the story have been deliberately left out. Nor have I dealt with the Communist memory of the war (which would require more than one book) or with the memories of various groups having a special attachment to the period, a subject that has been studied by others.[14]

My working hypothesis is this: the civil war, and particularly the inception, influence, and acts of the Vichy regime, played an essential if not primary role in the difficulties that the people of France have faced in reconciling themselves to their history—a greater role than the foreign occupation, the war, and the defeat, all things that, though

they have not vanished from people's minds, are generally perceived through the prism of Vichy.

Rather like the unconscious in Freudian theory, what is known as collective memory exists first of all in its *manifestations,* in the various ways by which it reveals its presence. The Vichy syndrome consists of a diverse set of symptoms whereby the trauma of the Occupation, and particularly that trauma resulting from internal divisions within France, reveals itself in political, social, and cultural life. Since the end of the war, moreover, that trauma has been perpetuated and at times exacerbated.

A chronological ordering of these symptoms brings into focus a four-stage process of evolution. Between 1944 and 1954 France had to deal directly with the aftermath of civil war, purge, and amnesty. I call this the "mourning phase," whose contradictions had a considerable impact on what came afterward. From 1954 to 1971 the subject of Vichy became less controversial, except for occasional eruptions in the period 1958–1962. The French apparently had repressed memories of the civil war with the aid of what came to be a dominant myth: "resistancialism." This term, first coined after the Liberation by adversaries of the purge, is used here in a rather different sense. By resistancialism I mean, first, a process that sought to minimize the importance of the Vichy regime and its impact on French society, *including its most negative aspects;* second, the construction of an object of memory, the "Resistance," whose significance transcended by far the sum of its active parts (the small groups of guerrilla partisans who did the actual fighting) and whose existence was embodied chiefly in certain sites and groups, such as the Gaullists and Communists, associated with fully elaborated ideologies; and, third, the identification of this "Resistance" with the nation as a whole, a characteristic feature of the Gaullist version of the myth.

Between 1971 and 1974 this carefully constructed myth was shattered; the mirror was broken. This was the third phase of the process, which is analyzed here as a "return of the repressed." In turn this inaugurated a fourth phase, continuing to this day: a phase of obsession, characterized on the one hand by the reawakening of Jewish memory and, on the other, by the importance that reminiscences of the Occupation assumed in French political debate.

The first part of the book thus attempts to trace the contours of a "neurosis." What is borrowed from psychoanalysis is simply a metaphor, not an explanatory schema. No attempt is made to sort out different types of symptoms: an offhand remark by a French president is treated on the same level as the scandal triggered by a film or a notorious political trial. At this stage of the argument, all that matters is the patent topicality of a reference to the past, however insignificant it may be in itself.

In the second part, however, I attempt to establish a hierarchy of symptoms by investigating the vectors of the past, particularly those that played a decisive role in the history of the syndrome: commemorations, film, and historiography (including both historical research and teaching). I consider commemorations because of their apparent failure to construct an official memory of the past; film because visual images seem to have had a decisive impact on the formation of a common, if not a collective, memory; and historiography because historians and their books are a primary vector of memory.

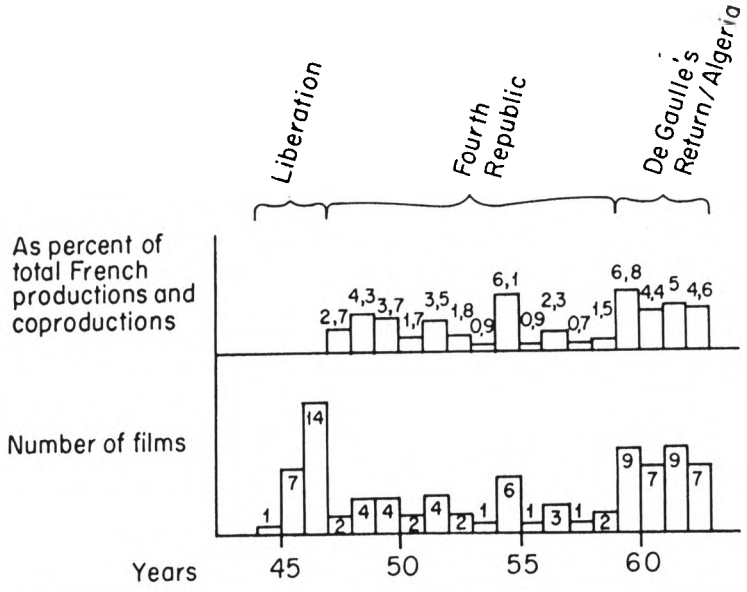
Finally, after analyzing the vectors of memory and studying the formulation of the signs used to represent the past (or reveal its existence), I turn my attention to the recipients, to what might be called "diffuse memory" as opposed to the organized memory of groups and political parties and of scholarly re-creation. This is, indeed, the ultimate winner in the contest among representations because it cannot by itself formulate a coherent and operational vision of the past that is anything other than individual. The question here is: were French people of various ages and outlooks influenced by the representations offered to them?

Based on the idea that the past survives in an active form in the present and on the assumption that such survival can be studied historically, this book is intended to be open-ended. So I make no claim to have said the last word on the subject. And one final remark: I have tried within the limits of my power not to become a prisoner of the syndrome I am describing.

ration in France. This impossibility is part of the reason why the past has "spontaneously" come back to life outside the official institutional settings. The persistence of the Vichy syndrome is the most striking sign of the failure of official memory.

The Dark Years and the Silver Screen

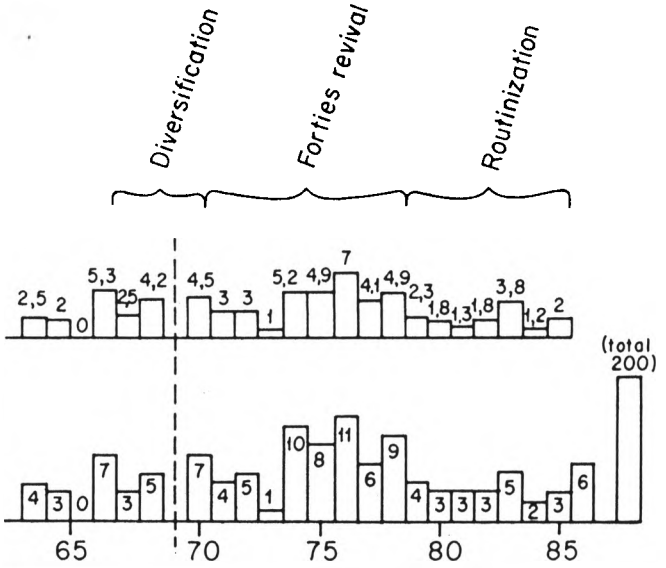
Film has played a particularly important role in the transmission of memory. Mass entertainment since the 1930s, the movies are a significant indicator of contemporary attitudes. During the war itself, moreover, film exerted a powerful influence on people's minds. Newsreels and propaganda films were an important source of information. Drama and other nondocumentary films enjoyed immense popularity during the Occupation as a form of escape. In June 1940, while German tanks were rolling over France, more than 800,000 people found time to go to the movies.[10] It is hardly surprising, then, that


Liberation
Fourth Republic
De Gaulle's Return/Algeria
As percent of total French productions and coproductions
2,7 4,3 3,7 1,7 3,5 1,8 0,9 6,1 0,9 2,3 0,7 1,5 6,8 4,4 5 4,6
Number of films
1 7 14 2 4 4 2 4 2 1 6 1 3 1 2 9 7 9 7
Years
45 50 55 60

World War II in French film (see Appendix 2 for list of films included)

people who lived through the events should have sought to recapture the experience in movie theaters after the war. Furthermore, film sometimes proved better than other media at capturing the repressed and the ineffable, owing in part to the immediate impact of archival footage, in part to film's power, however imperfect, to reconstruct an era. Two striking examples of that power are of course *The Sorrow and the Pity* and *Shoah*.

Still World War II inspired few films and even fewer filmmakers. Between 1944 and 1986 only two hundred French-produced or coproduced films took the Occupation, the war, or the Resistance as their central theme or used the period as a dramatic setting. Even in periods when wartime films were at a peak, they never accounted for more than 7 percent of total French production, at most a dozen films per year. In forty years France has produced fewer films about the war than were made during the four years of the Occupation. More than twice as many foreign (mostly English and American) films on



(1944–1969 figures are for calendar year; 1969–1986 figures are for film season, August–August)

the subject have been distributed in France. The figure shows the variation in French film output over time.[11] When we look at the content of these films, it becomes clear that the production of films about the wartime years evolved through several phases.

The Liberation

The period from the Liberation to the end of 1946 is exceptional in every respect. Twenty-two films were produced in a little over two years. Nearly half were documentary montages produced with the aid of the army (*Fils de France* by Pierre Blondy and *Caravane blindée* by the Army Film Service, 1946), the Resistance (*La Bataille du rail* by René Clément, 1946), or the Allied governments (*Présence au combat* by M. Cravenne, 1946). Of this total, fourteen films focused primarily on the Resistance, the remainder on the war. *Le Père tranquille* by René Clément (one of the period's most inspired directors) was probably the most notable film of the moment. Although it honors the achievements of resistance fighters, it does not embrace the resistancialist mythology. The guerrilla war is portrayed as a difficult feat, more a daily struggle than an epic conquest. The hero is no misfit but a good family man whose commitment to the struggle disrupts his family life. And when obliged to execute an informer he seems less a vigilante than a citizen, tormented by an act he is forced to commit.

The Discretion of the Fourth Republic

Not only were fewer films produced in the period from 1947 to 1958, but those that were made had none of the historical realism of the earlier phase. In eleven years barely thirty films were produced. War films such as Georges Péclet's *Le Grand Cirque* (1950) and resistance films such as Titus Vibe-Muller's *La Bataille de l'eau lourde* (1949) still predominated. Austere, lyrical works such as Jean-Pierre Melville's *Le Silence de la mer* (1949) were relatively rare. According to Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, films made during the Fourth Republic were notable primarily for their treatment of everyday life, for showing how the majority of French people lived during the dark times. The masterpiece in this genre was Claude Autant-Lara's *La Traversée de Paris* (1956), which created what has since become the hackneyed (if

often accurate) image of a nation preoccupied with its own survival and more intent on killing hogs than Germans. In its own way the film tossed the first brickbats at the nascent myth of the Resistance. As Jacques Siclier noted, "Autant-Lara 'bit the bullet' at a time when Robert Bresson was striking a proud and tragic pose in *Un Condamné à mort s'est échappé,* a 1956 film that turns the escape of a partisan into a spiritual adventure."[12]

Significantly, however, the first allusions to more delicate subjects began to appear. Although collaboration, Vichy, and fascism still have no political status and are rarely mentioned except by allusion, the collabo has become a familiar, even commonplace, figure in such films as Clément's *Les Maudits* (1947), Henri-Georges Clouzot's *Manon* (1948), André Cayatte's *Les Amants de Vérone* (1949), and Autant-Lara's *Le Bon Dieu sans confession* (1954).

Only one film, André Berthomieu's *Le Bal des pompiers* (1948), chose to show directly a family divided by the Occupation. For some critics this was an "ignoble" film, but Siclier called it "emptyheaded and edifying."

Although the deportation was largely a taboo subject during this period, it did inspire a few filmmakers, such as Dréville, Clouzot, Cayatte, and Lampin in *Retour à la vie* (1949) and above all Alain Resnais, who shot his very famous *Nuit et brouillard* (Night and Fog) in 1956. This short subject was based on a script by Jean Cayrol and produced with the cooperation of the Comité d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale. Unlike *Shoah,* Lanzmann's film of thirty years later, Resnais focused more on the deportation of resistance fighters and political prisoners than on deportation for racial reasons. François Truffaut's reaction is interesting:

> *Night and Fog* is a sublime film about which it is difficult to speak. Any adjective, any aesthetic judgment would be out of place in speaking of this work, which is not an "indictment" or a "poem" but a "meditation" on the deportation. The film's impact lies entirely in the tone adopted by the filmmakers: a terrifying mildness. You leave the theater feeling "devastated" and not very happy with yourself.[13]

Perhaps the film was too sublime, too isolated, and surely too far ahead of its time. Selected for the Cannes Film Festival in 1956, the

film ran afoul of the censors. Resnais was forced to remove an offending gendarme's *képi,* which appeared in a shot of the transit camp at Pithiviers, a camp set up by the Germans but administered by the French. The censors thus obliterated not the filmmaker's words or images but an actual historical detail, an incontestable fact. The fact that an official historical agency was involved in the production of the film made no difference. Ultimately the film was shown outside the festival in the wake of diplomatic pressure from the West German embassy and the French foreign ministry.

The Reawakening: 1958–1962

De Gaulle's return to power served as a stimulus to the imagination. More than thirty films were made between 1958 and 1962, as many as over the previous eleven years; these accounted for 4 to 7 percent of total French film output, compared to around 1 percent for the previous period. Unsurprisingly, the Resistance was portrayed in more "Gaullist" and military colors: in addition to Christian-Jaque's *Babette s'en va-t-en guerre* (1959), which combined the period's two living myths, Brigitte Bardot and General de Gaulle, other notable films included Dréville's *Normandie-Niémen* (1960) and Denys de la Patellière's *Un Taxi pour Tobrouk* (1961).

This same period also witnessed the emergence of the antihero, the countermodel who was reassuring because he stood in closer proximity to the public than did the august figure of de Gaulle. Compared with Reggiani, Frankeur, Blier, and Ventura, the somber heroes of Julien Duvivier's *Marie Octobre* (1959), Fernandel rather stands out in Henri Verneuil's *La Vache et le prisonnier* (also 1959). The prisoner of war, that most un-Gaullist figure, figured in any number of films: André Cayatte's *Le Passage du Rhin* (1959), Jean Renoir's *Le Caporal épinglé* (1962), and Alex Joffé's *Les Culottes rouges* (1962). A few films attempted to explore other shadowy subjects: J. Kerchbron's *Vacances en enfer* (1961) dealt with a milicien who deserts in the company of a young woman, much as in Modiano and Malle's *Lacombe Lucien,* while Jean Dewever's *Les Honneurs de la guerre* (1962) bucked the tide (and flopped at the box office) by stressing the hazard of circumstance rather than opportune heroism. Armand Gatti's *Enclos* (1961) was perhaps the only film set in a concentration

camp. Finally, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze's *La Dénonciation* (1962) and Alain Resnais' *Muriel* (1963) were among the few films of this period to draw an explicit parallel between the struggles of the Occupation and those connected with the Algerian War.

Perhaps another film, seemingly unrelated to the 1940s, ought to be added to the list: Yves Robert's *La Guerre des boutons,* which came out in 1961. Based on a novel by Louis Pergaud first published in 1912, the story is more a child's fable than an account of the *guerre franco-française.* And yet even in Pergaud's original book, politics was not entirely absent from the rivalry between the two villages: "For the people of Velrans were churchgoers, while those of Longeverne were reds."[14] Transposed into postwar France, the story is redolent of the atmosphere of the troubled years. In Robert's film, the general, Lebrac, resembles a partisan chief. The traitor, Bacaillé, the only character in the film who wears a cape and Basque beret, is the very image of a man who would denounce his neighbors. To top it off, he is the victim, in the film's harshest scene, of a rather brutal purge. The Aztec—the enemy—arrives one day in a terrifying "armored vehicle" (a brand new tractor), a veritable deluge of iron that surprises the people of Longeverne as they celebrate victory. The more naive villagers, having made a heroic cavalry charge against the enemy (in the finest traditions of the French military academy at Saint Cyr), believe that they are safe in their entrenched camp. There is, moreover, an extraordinary rapport between generations: the sons go off to war as their fathers did before them and as their children will do after them, to fight the hereditary enemy. All of this takes place in a rural world that has not quite entered the technological era or abandoned the Pétainist harrow. If Pergaud's novel is an archetype of internal struggle in France, set against the background of the Commune, the struggle between church and state over education, and the birth of the Republic, Robert's film embodies perhaps the only possible screen treatment of that novel fifty years after it was written, and after Vichy.

Diversification in the Sixties

Interest in World War II continued in the period 1963–1970, although no clear trend can be discerned. It might seem almost as if a

balance had been struck among various possible ways of dealing with the past. To be sure, René Clément's *Is Paris Burning?* (1966) struck a pompous and false note. The film's opening in Paris on 24 October was the occasion for a street demonstration, military parades, and, despite the heavy rain that fell on the capital that night, a sound-and-light show.

A purer, more faithful portrayal of a Free French resistance network could be seen, however, in Jean-Pierre Melville's *L'Armée des ombres* (1969). Oddly enough, the film contains no trace of May '68 or of de Gaulle's departure from office. It treats the careers of a few exceptional but easily comprehensible individuals and with its excellent screenplay and discreet (but already anachronistic) Gaullism might well have crystallized a certain view of the era. But, beyond arriving on the scene too late, the film showed too much of the actual diversity of temperaments and types and was therefore incompatible with the abstract and timeless idea of "Resistance" honored by de Gaulle and Malraux. Too much concerned with individual fates, the film lacked political punch.

For that very reason, Melville's masterpiece, which appeared five years after the Pantheonization of Jean Moulin, marked a turning point. It ended all possibility that a film would ever be made that might serve as foundation for the myth of the Resistance. Soon Ophuls' *The Sorrow and the Pity,* which was shot at about the same time, would make it pointless even to think of such a thing. For different reasons neither Clément nor Melville had the makings of a great "official filmmaker" on the model of Eisenstein.

A significant fact about this period is that the Occupation and the war lost their special status and became suitable backgrounds for ever more numerous light comedies, such as Jean-Paul Rappeneau's *La Vie de château* (1966) and above all the smash hit *La Grande Vadrouille* by Gérard Oury (1966), probably the only film to have made the children of parents who survived the short rations of the 1940s regret that they had not been born before the end of the war.

Thus in the late 1960s the French cinema presented a variety of reassuring images of the war years, images from which the occasional dark memory was not excluded. It is misleading to say that Gaullism offered a monolithic image of the period. Film in the Gaullist years drew on many different sources of inspiration, although the government, with its own preferences, encouraged some and discouraged others.

The Forties Revival

The release of *The Sorrow and the Pity* in April 1971 marked the beginning of a new phase, which took two more years to build up steam. Between 1974 and 1978 the number of films devoted to or inspired by World War II increased sharply. Some forty-five films were shot in this period, more than during the entire previous decade. The eleven films made in 1976 alone accounted for 7 percent of France's total film output that year, as high a proportion as in 1946. No doubt about it: the "breaking of the mirror" had an impact on French cinema. Many of these films dealt directly with the Occupation as subject, moreover, and not merely as background.

Still we must be careful not to overstate the importance of the forties revival. Although the vogue for the past did plunge French moviegoers into the thick of the Occupation, it also conveyed a variety of messages in a range of genres. (In Chapter 3 we saw that the same held true in literature.)

Apart from *The Sorrow and the Pity,* which stands in a category all its own because it directly or indirectly inspired so many subsequent films, four genres may be singled out:

Prosecutors. There were not many of these, but they caused a considerable stir. Following the lead of *The Sorrow and the Pity,* they sought to discredit Vichy, collaboration, and Nazism generally. Some of the films in this category were documentaries: Harris and Sédouy's *Français si vous saviez* (1973), Jérôme Kanapa's *La République est morte à Dien Bien Phu* (1974), which was only partially concerned with the Occupation, Marc Hillel's *Au nom de la race* (1975), and André Halimi's *Chantons sous l'Occupation* (1976). Others were historical reconstructions: Costa-Gavras' *Section spéciale* (1975) and Frank Cassenti's *L'Affiche rouge* (released in November 1976). Another film in this vein was Jean Yanne's *Les Chinois à Paris* (1973), whose message, though simplistic, was of the same order. However zealous or moderate, all these prosecutorial films called attention to virtually unknown aspects of the period, from Vichy's special tribunals, presided over by genuine magistrates, to resistance groups com-

posed of immigrants. All partook of a certain self-flagellatory mood in the country, with the French generally portrayed as cowards if not outright fascists. Yet all gave prominence—in some cases systematic prominence—to previously neglected historical realities.

Chroniclers. These filmmakers attempted to capture the atmosphere of the Occupation in a realist vein shot through with personal memories. Examples of the genre include Pierre Granier-Defferre's *Le Train* (1973), Michel Drach's *Les Violons du bal* (1974), Edouard Molinaro's *L'Ironie du sort,* Michel Mitrani's *Les Guichets du Louvre* (1974), André Téchiné's *Souvenirs d'en France,* Jacques Doillon's *Un Sac de billes* (1975), René Féret's *La Communion solennelle* (1977), and many others. The Occupation is not the only subject of all these films, but all do touch on it, more with nostalgia than with revulsion. In most cases Jewish memories and commemoration of the genocide play a central, almost obsessive, and again rather systematic role.

Aesthetes. Some filmmakers distinguished themselves by flirting with scandal. Perhaps the most notorious of the group was Louis Malle, whose 1974 film *Lacombe Lucien,* based on a screenplay by Patrick Modiano, was considered heretical at the time. In hindsight it is not difficult to see what seemed so shocking. What was problematic about the film was its philosophy: whereas previous films had portrayed the period as a conflict between good and evil, Malle created a murky, ambiguous atmosphere by following the uncertain fortunes of a young French aide to the Gestapo, a character who, of all the types of French collaborationists, is the most difficult to understand and the hardest to excuse because it is unmotivated by ideological misconception. He flirts for a while with joining the Resistance only to sign up ultimately with the Gestapo, not out of political conviction but because he likes to fight, thirsts for action, and is drawn to the violence in the air. The film came out at a time when the French public was just beginning to rediscover the fact that France had produced its own ideologically committed fascists. Hence at least some moviegoers probably expected the film to contain analysis or indictment and were surprised to find it silent on the political aspect of Lucien's engagement while implying that commitment to the Resistance stemmed from similar motives. Caught up in the logic of Modiano's story, Malle turned his back on history, as he had every right to do, even if he sometimes played with rather too heavy a hand on sensitivities of

which he was perfectly well aware. His film is therefore more provocative than thought-provoking. With the benefit of hindsight, however, it is clear that this film altered the simplistic image of the 1940s as much as, and perhaps more subtly than, *The Sorrow and the Pity.*

Under this same head one can also place several other films of varying quality but similar in their fascination with Nazism and the Occupation: Liliana Cavanni's *Portier de nuit* (1974), Claude Lelouch's *Les Bons et les méchants* (1976), Christian Gion's *One two two* (1978), a harbinger of the genre's exhaustion. On an altogether higher plane, Joseph Losey's *Monsieur Klein* (1976) is probably the strongest allegorical treatment of the Occupation's destructive effects on body and spirit.

Opportunists. Generally mediocre, these films use the Occupation setting in pat and formulaic ways. Included in this category is an endless succession of war films such as Robert Lamoureux's *Mais où est donc passée la 7e compagnie?* (1973), *Opération Lady Marlène* and *On a retrouvé la 7e compagnie* (1975); Jacques Besnard's *Le Jour de gloire* (1976); and Philippe Clair's *La 7e compagnie au clair de lune* (1977)—a film a year until interest shifted from World War II to peacetime maneuvers. There was also a series of pornographic films, inaugurated (unwittingly) by Lilianna Cavanni's *Portier de Nuit*: Guy Pérol's *Le Commando des chauds lapins* (1975), James Gartner's *Train spécial pour SS* (1977), Mark Stern's *Elsa Fraulein SS* (1977), and José Benazéraf's *Bordel SS* (1978). The picture of the Occupation in these films is perforce limited, but it shows that interest in the subject cut across all genres: this breadth was part of what sustained the forties revival.

Endlessly scrutinized, reworked, and even eroticized, the Occupation became familiar to people of all generations in the France of the 1970s. It was a frequent object of reference and a constant presence.

The 1980s: Normalization?

From 1978 to 1987 the tide seemed to be ebbing, but after the Barbie trial in May 1987 the subject of World War II came back in vogue. It is now a "classic" subject, a regular fixture of the cinema. Fourteen films about the wartime years were released between August 1987 and December 1989. The stark opposition between resistance and

collaboration gave way to a more complex view; it was now possible to show a more complete image of the past, without the political manichaeanism and mythologizing of past years. As a result, the cinema ceased to be the great violator of taboos (with a few notable exceptions). What matters during this period is not so much the quantity as the importance of certain films (as judged by a historian, not a film critic), in particular those films that indicate a significant evolution in popular ideas and attitudes.

François Truffaut's *Le Dernier Métro* (1980) gives an accurate, balanced picture of the time, a sort of consensus view, and as such it was acclaimed by the critics. Significantly, the film's reputation rests not so much on its subject—a theater in occupied Paris and the people associated with it—as on its inherent qualities as film. What interested the critics was a new film by a noted director, not a new film about the Occupation, a sign that scandal was no longer in vogue. Contrast this situation with that of a decade earlier, when the qualities of a film like *Lacombe Lucien* were all but overshadowed by the choice of subject.

Jean-Marie Poiré's *Papy fait de la Résistance* (1982) suggested a different sort of evolution. Though hardly a masterpiece, the film was as iconoclastic as anyone could wish: a very French family steadfastly resists the invader. A German who happens to be a poet (a caricature of the officer in *Silence de la mer*), a collaborationist concierge, a pontificating Gaullist, and a reluctant résistant disport themselves in this unpretentious farce, whose target is not so much the Resistance as its sacred images, particularly those so often seen in French films over the previous forty years. The film respectfully thumbs its nose at Melville, Clément, Oury, and others. Willy Holt, the film's designer, was a man of much experience in the genre, having worked previously on such films as *Is Paris Burning?* More important, *Papy* was probably the first film about the Occupation that never once touched on the period's tragic dimension, that made no concession to the "context," that showed no respect for anybody or anything. The comic masterpiece *La Grande Vadrouille,* on which *Papy* was modeled, adopted an attitude of instinctive humility whenever it touched on a hero or martyr. *Papy* did no such thing. Significantly, this irritating bit of fluff aroused no protest. In 1973 Jean Yanne's heavily allegorical *Les Chinois à Paris* had unleashed passions and drawn howls of

protest from former résistants outraged by its portrayal of the French as cowardly and ridiculous. Ten years later, no criticism of this sort was heard, unless it was from the Communists, who rather clumsily denounced the film's "irresponsibility," or *Le Matin de Paris,* which saw nothing but "imbecility."[15]

It is striking, moreover, to measure the distance traveled by Louis Malle between *Lacombe Lucien* and *Au Revoir les enfants* (1987). Acclaimed by all the critics, the latter film won seven Caesars in 1988 and appealed to a wide audience. Suddenly Malle had ceased to be the provocative director who had made *Lacombe Lucien* and *Murmur of the Heart.* He was now the director of a film that spoke to the concerns raised by the Barbie trial and the fate of the children of Izieu, whose disappearance was related, however remotely, to the incident that inspired the film. In any case, the quality of the film derives less from its moving depiction of the fate of a Jewish child as seen through the eyes of an "Aryan" classmate than from its unblinking and unsentimental depiction of adolescence. Here again, as in the Truffaut film, the setting lends substance to the story without overwhelming it. Of course the subject lent itself to such treatment, but the film can also be seen as yet another sign of the "normalization" of the Occupation as a theme, which made it possible to view works of art as art rather than as didactic lessons in history. Privately, however, Malle apparently prefers *Lacombe Lucien,* a film that was ahead of its time, whereas *Au Revoir les enfants* reflected the prevailing atmosphere.[16]

In broad terms, then, the films of the 1980s abandoned the militancy, didacticism, and criticism of the forties revival. The Occupation had become a subject of adult films for an adult public. Even documentary films evolved along similar lines. Although documentary by definition is historical and educational, newer films in the genre were less schematic than earlier ones.

Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) and, to a lesser degree, Marcel Ophuls' *Hôtel Terminus* (1988) illustrate the point. *Shoah* is undeniably a great work, and though hardly without faults it has become something of a sacred cow for critics: "This is a work that insists on introspection . . . It belongs not to the realm of entertainment but to that of ritual."[17] Highly original, the film uses no archival footage and is based entirely on eyewitness accounts. What is so striking is the choice of subject: the genocide not as historical phenomenon but as

survival in the present, as a density of images in the minds of survivors and spectators alike. *Shoah* is thus a fine illustration of the conflicts that may arise between history and memory, between a scientific reconstruction of the past, which erects the facts into a hierarchy, stands aloof, and risks losing sight of individuals and hardening into an abstraction, and a "re-creation" with a moral purpose: to bring back the dead, to whom survivors lend their voices and their presence, thus abolishing the apparently irreducible distance between past and present. To be sure, *Shoah* offers a subjective view of history, in ways that are not always made explicit. Why attach such importance to Polish antisemitism rather than to the antisemitism of other countries, such as France, that participated more or less voluntarily in the Final Solution? What historical link is there between the undeniable antisemitism of the Poles and the location of Nazi death camps in Poland (occupied and partly annexed by the Third Reich)? Is there any reason to think that, if the Poles had not been antisemitic, they could have done any more than anyone else to stop the slaughter? These judgments are implicit in the editing and structure of the film. It makes no difference that all the words are spoken by actual participants in the drama: victims, torturers, and "others." Yet the force of the film lies precisely in its subjectivity, in the filmmaker's avowed partiality. The significance of the film would have been lost if it had tried to be "historical," which is to say didactic and impartial. But this is why it is so absurd to insist that this is the only way in which the genocide should be represented. True, Lanzmann did succeed, as he claimed often enough, in doing what few professional historians had done. He demonstrated that the unnameable was not necessarily ineffable. He showed that one could touch the conscience of a generation too young to have lived through the war. And he proved that it was by no means impossible to think about Auschwitz, indeed that to do so would be among the most important tasks of the late twentieth century. The film was powerful because it gave voice to people who, rightly or wrongly, felt they were being excluded from history.

Survivors, beleaguered by the negationists, were also troubled in a different way by the proliferation of scholarly works on the genocide. In this respect Simone Veil's attitude is typical. On numerous occasions, for example during a conference organized by the Institut

d'Histoire du Temps Présent in December 1987, she stated that the historian's point of view was in almost every way incompatible with the survivor's point of view. (Since then she has moderated her position somewhat.) In addition, *Shoah* was well attuned to the reawakening of Jewish memory and to the obsessional phase of the syndrome (1970–1980). The film played something of the same role that *The Sorrow and the Pity* had played with respect to the Occupation, although its manner and tone were of course quite different. Hence *Shoah* remains an essential key to understanding the representations of the 1980s.

Marcel Ophuls' *Hôtel Terminus* (1988), a film about the career of Klaus Barbie, his work for U.S. intelligence, and the early stages of his trial, had less of an impact than *Shoah* despite Ophuls' talent as a director. The film failed to find an audience. The work was probably less well attuned than *Shoah* to what the audience of the eighties was looking for, and its style was familiar from Ophuls' earlier work. Furthermore, the film was inevitably overshadowed by the trial itself. Yet it is one of the few recent works to continue along lines first laid down in the 1970s, at a time when most others have taken a "deconstructive" stance for political and didactic ends.

Earlier François Garçon wrote: "The 1980s are no longer the time for inner conflict or for rummaging in the recent and nauseating past."[18] One question remains, however: what connection is there, finally, between cinematic representation and collective memory? How is the syndrome related to the developments described above?

During the Fourth Republic, few films dealing with the Occupation were made, but this lack of interest in the subject hardly reflects what was going on in the world of politics, nor does it correspond to the turmoil evident in public opinion through 1954. To judge solely by the movies, moreover, it would be hard to identify the end of the Fourth Republic as a turning point. Filmmakers seem to have hung back, remaining silent and avoiding the subject. Film thus made little contribution to the creation of myths about the war and instead was content with ratifying the status quo.

The shift that occurred between 1958 and 1962 came about in a period of turmoil stemming primarily from the Algerian conflict. The intention of the movies, however, seems to have been to put a damper

The New Yorker, Nov. 20, 2000, pp. 62-76.

PROFILES

AN EXILE IN PARADISE

How Jean-Luc Godard disappeared from the headlines and into the movies.

BY RICHARD BRODY

During the 1960 Cannes Film Festival, two months after the release of "Breathless," his first feature, Jean-Luc Godard told an interviewer, "I have the impression of loving the cinema less than I did a year ago—simply because I have made a film, and the film was well received, and so forth. So I hope that my second film will be received very badly and that this will make me want to make films again." The twenty-nine-year-old director was not only daring the powers of the movie world to withdraw their approval but begging them to do so: "I prefer to work when there are people against whom I have to struggle." Godard, who will turn seventy this December, has been struggling ever since; indeed, he could hardly have anticipated the price he would pay for getting his wish.

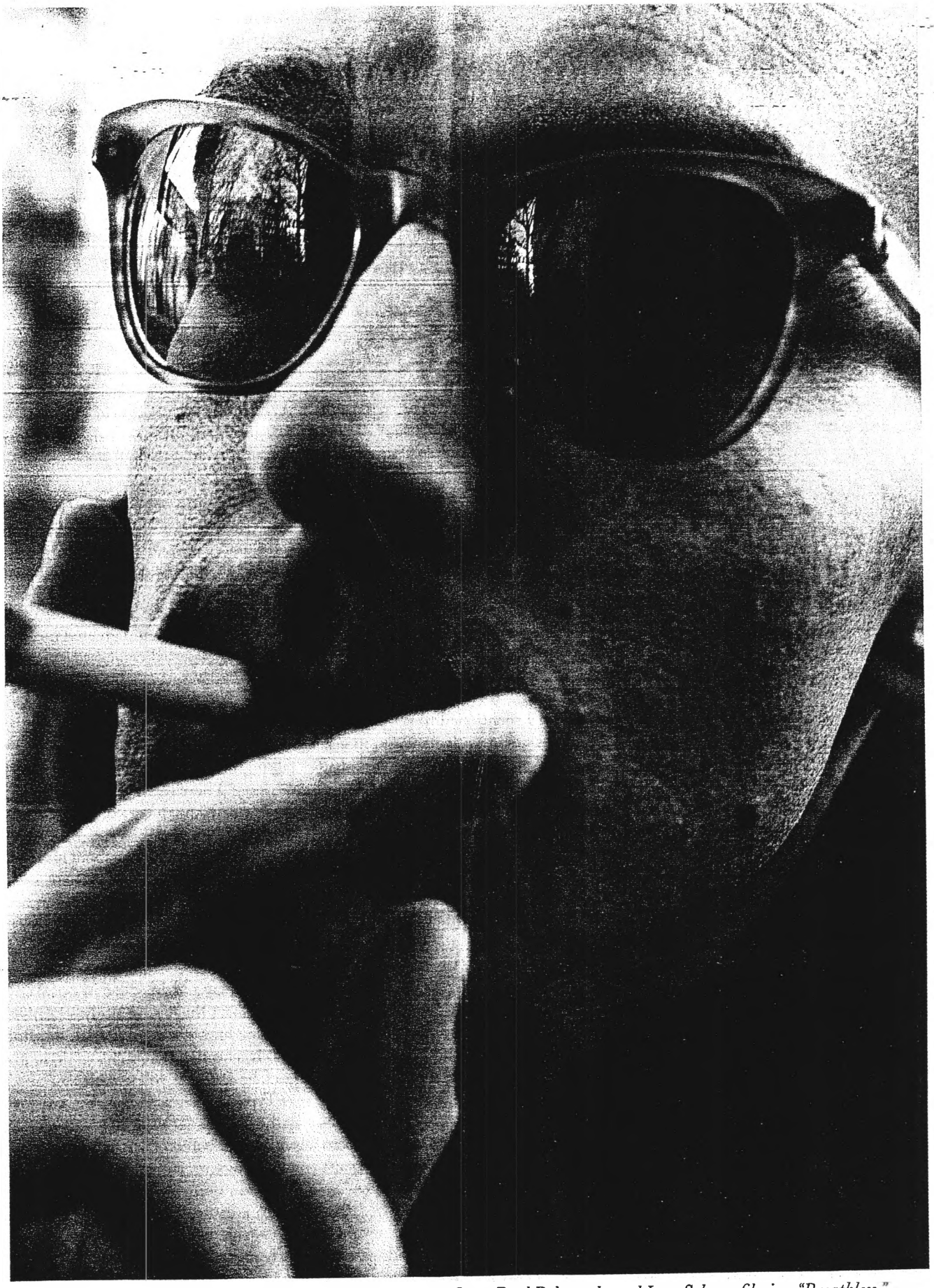
In the history of cinema, only two other directors have made first full-length films that forever changed the art—D. W. Griffith, with "Birth of a Nation," in 1915, and Orson Welles, with "Citizen Kane," in 1941—and they, too, eventually found themselves in exile. Unlike Griffith and Welles, who fought to keep a place in the film industry and then, once excluded, tried to claw their way back in, Godard has remained productive on the margins, but at great personal sacrifice. His single-minded quest to unify his life and his work has had the extraordinary side effect of rendering him out of place in both: hyperreal and disarmingly present in his films; oracular and almost incorporeal in person.

When "Breathless" was first shown, it was an immediate critical and commercial success: no other film had been at once so connected to all that had gone before it and yet so liberating. The plot was a familiar one—a young man gone bad and on the run, the woman he loves unsure whether to run with him—but its execution was utterly new. Shot with a handheld camera in real locations, using available light, and edited with daring visual discontinuity, "Breathless" felt like a high-energy fusion of jazz and philosophy. The actors spoke in hyperbolic aphorisms that leaped from slang to Rilke, and ideas and emotions came and went in a heartbeat; the film resembled a live recording of a person thinking in real time. "Breathless" may not have been as endearing as Truffaut's "The 400 Blows," or as intellectually demanding as Alain Resnais's "Hiroshima Mon Amour," but in the years to come it inspired New Cinemas from Czechoslovakia to Brazil.

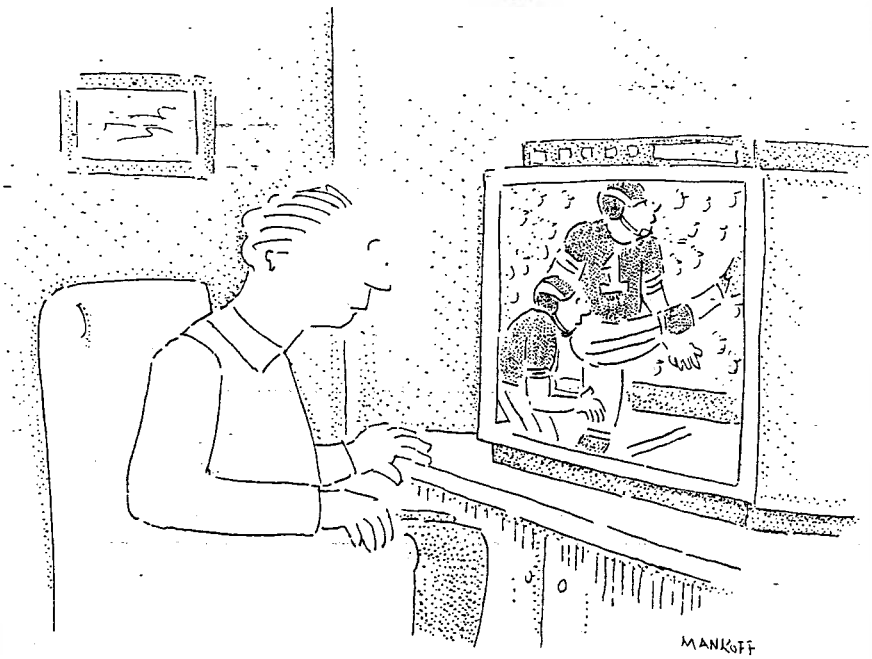
Between 1960 and 1967, Godard made fourteen feature films, including such modernist classics as "Vivre Sa Vie," "Pierrot le Fou," and "Two or Three Things I Know About Her," and in them he continued to outdo both himself and his contemporaries in stretching the limits of narrative film. As a formal innovator, as a social critic, as an unflinching confessor of hot emotions and cold truths, he became a singular figure of the sixties. Writing in *Partisan Review* in February, 1968, Susan Sontag called him one of "the great culture heroes of our time," and compared him to Picasso and Schoenberg. During Godard's 1968 speaking tour of American universities, one student said he was "as irreplaceable, for us, as Bob Dylan."

Yet by that point Godard was in a crisis of self-doubt; the pace of current events was outstripping his ability to invent new forms to engage them. In the earlier films, he had joyfully embraced the images of mass culture—magazines, advertising, pop tunes, and, above all, Hollywood movies. Now he felt repulsed by the world those images signified and fostered, with its unreflective consumerism and its support for the

LEFT: ©RAYMOND CAUCHETIER; RIGHT: CONTACT PRESS



Godard photographed by William Klein, in 1960, and with Jean-Paul Belmondo and Jean Seberg, filming "Breathless."



"The kick is up, and it's, it's, it's too close to call!"

Vietnam War. The last of this torrent of films, "Weekend"—made famous by a ten-minute tracking shot of a traffic jam (actually three distinct shots, separated by brief intertitles)—concludes with two title cards: the first reads "End of Film," the second "End of Cinema." When Godard finished "Weekend," he advised his production crew to look for work elsewhere. So began Godard's defiant withdrawal—first from the movie industry, and then from Paris. He did not make another commercial film for more than a decade.

The films that Godard has made since his return to the movie business, in 1979, are arguably deeper, more technically accomplished, and more daring than the early ones. But they are also far more fragmented in form and rarefied in content, at a time when Hollywood has accustomed even sophisticated viewers to simpler films. This unhappy coincidence, combined with the changed economics of the industry, has made it impossible for any but the most assiduous American fans to keep up with Godard's work of the past twenty years. The last time a Godard film received a regular commercial release in a first-run theatre in New York was in 1988, when "King Lear" played for three weeks at the Quad Cinema. According to *Variety*, it took in $61,821 at the box office in all of North America. It is currently unavailable on home video or DVD. The loss is tragic: it's as if American museums and galleries were to show nothing of Picasso after Cubism.

When I mentioned to some friends that I was going to Switzerland to visit Godard, they were taken aback: they had assumed he was dead. In Godard's futuristic film "Alphaville" (1965), the hero, Lemmy Caution, Secret Agent 003, is warned that as a romantic individualist he is out of date and doomed. "You will suffer something worse than death," he is told. "You will become a legend." This prophecy has been fulfilled in the person of Jean-Luc Godard.

Godard works out of the basement of a modern low-rise residential building in Rolle, the town in Switzerland where he and his partner, Anne-Marie Miéville, have lived since 1978. Godard maintains that the town is outside one of the defining loops of modern life. "Here in Rolle," he says, "you can't get a package from Federal Express."

I asked him why not.

"Because he comes by. I'm never in. He leaves word: 'Call us.' So, I don't call."

Rolle, set on a hillside by the shores of Lake Geneva, is in timeless harmony with its natural setting. Across the street from the hotel where I was staying was a thirteenth-century castle perched on the banks of the vast, jewel-bright lake. A hundred yards out, a small island with domes of dense foliage pierced by a proud, solemn obelisk resembled a Fragonard come to life; Mont Blanc hovered weightlessly in the distance.

When I arrived at Godard's office, I could see the filmmaker through a glass door, seated at a broad, uncluttered trestle desk. He was talking on the phone as he waved me in, past one wall of compact disks and another of books and pictures. He sat facing a roomful of video equipment that could stock a small TV station, including a television monitor showing the semifinals of the French Open. (He is an enthusiastic tennis player, and ranks himself "ten-millionth in the world.")

Godard was wearing black pants, black sandals, and a white T-shirt with a discreet Nike swoosh over the left breast. His hair was sparse and gray, and his face was spiky with white stubble. After several gentle *politesses* into the phone, he hung up and greeted me. He said that he and Miéville had long admired *The New Yorker's* cartoons, and that they had clipped one that exemplified their own situation: a unicorn wearing a suit is seated at a desk and talking on the phone, with a caption reading, "These rumors of my nonexistence are making it very difficult for me to obtain financing."

I began by asking him about his most recently released feature film, "For Ever Mozart," from 1996, a bitter fantasy about art and mourning. In it, three young French people with lofty ideas but idle hands take off for Sarajevo to put on a play and are killed in Bosnia by paramilitary thugs. One of the victims is the daughter of an old French director who has been stalled in his work; in his grief, he finds the will to create.

Typically, Godard was not satisfied with the film. "It wasn't very good," he said. "The actors aren't good enough, and things remained too theoretical." Godard's complaint about his movie led to a complaint about young actors today: that even unknowns, inundated with media hype, comport themselves like stars and are "less available" to direction: "They think they know what to

do, by the fact that they've been chosen. They have no doubt. Doubt no longer exists today. With digital, doubt no longer exists."

This abrupt switch from the sociological to the technological is typical of Godard's conversation: his sentences, like his films, are always soaring into abstractions, or breaking off, pivoting on an instant of silence to change direction. "With digital, there is no past," he continued. "I'm reluctant to edit on these new so-called 'virtual' machines, these digital things, because, as far as I'm concerned, there's no past. In other words, if you want to see the previous shot, O.K., you do this"—he tapped the table like a button—"and you see it at once. It doesn't take any time to get there, the time to unspool in reverse, the time to go backward. You're there right away. So there's an entire time that no longer exists, that has been suppressed. And that's why films are much more mediocre, because time no longer exists."

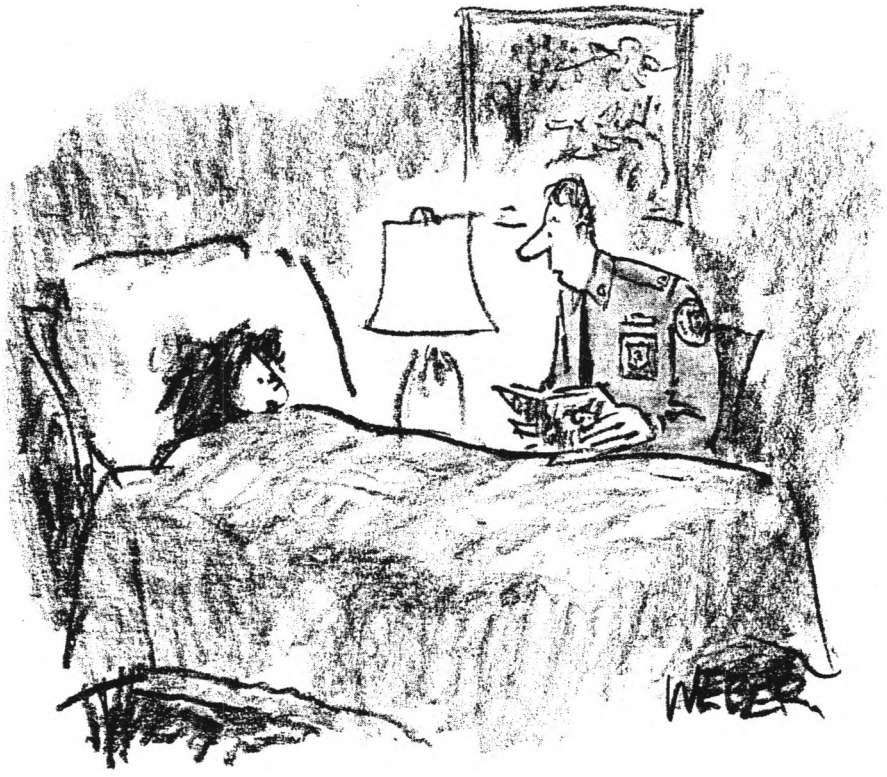
Godard is deeply involved with the past, and with the challenges of representing it on film. His new film, "In Praise of Love," which he is still editing, concerns an elderly French couple in Brittany who are former heroes of the Resistance, and whose life story Steven Spielberg has offered to buy, and the family argument that ensues over whether the offer should be accepted. Spielberg's presumption to historical authority is one of Godard's pet peeves. When, in 1995, Godard turned down an invitation to receive an honorary award from the New York Film Critics Circle, he wrote to its chairman declaring himself unworthy of the honor because of his failure to accomplish several things—foremost, "to prevent Mr. Spielberg from reconstructing Auschwitz."

Spielberg wants "to dominate the world," Godard charged in 1995, "by the fact of wanting to please before finding truth or knowledge. Spielberg, like many others, wants to convince before he discusses. In that, there is something very totalitarian." Now, in his office, Godard advanced that argument with an allusion to "Saving Private Ryan," connecting the Normandy invasion to the invasion by American cinema. "To my mind, I think that's even the reason why the Americans landed, it's for the American film, and now it's happened." After all, he continued, "when Nixon signed a contract with China, the first thing is always the films. Cheese, airplanes—that comes later."

Like many contemporary French thinkers, Godard believes that France is enduring an American cultural occupation as significant as the German occupation during the Second World War, and equally hard to resist. He told me about a film he had been close to making that fell through, called "Conversations with Dmitri." It was about the French film industry under a hypothetical Soviet occupation, and he intended it to be a comment on "the American cultural occupation, the German occupation, all occupations."

Godard lays much of the blame for what he perceives as the loss of the past, the failure of cultural memory, on the present-day American occupation. He complained to me that the young, media-savvy actors in "For Ever Mozart" didn't recognize actors from twenty years ago, and suggested, as a corrective, that television should show "only the past, nothing of the present, not even the weather." He continued, "They should give the weather from twenty years ago. Tennis matches from twenty years ago, not today. But what's happening today, well, our children will see in twenty years. There's no hurry—twenty years."

On the subject of his own past, Godard has relatively little to say, and he has reproached interviewers for dwelling on it. As a child, he was something of a loner, yet he was anything but alone; in fact, he had the kind of refined, close-knit family that one can spend a lifetime trying to escape. Born in Paris, on December 3, 1930, the second of four children, Jean-Luc Godard had a privileged and sheltered childhood. His father, Paul-Jean Godard, was a French-born doctor who became a Swiss citizen; his mother, born Odile Monod, was the daughter of extremely wealthy French bankers. Both were Protestant, and both were literary. Godard credits his father for his taste for German Romanticism and his mother for his love of novels. He spent his childhood reading, skiing, and travelling among his family's various estates, on both the French and Swiss sides of Lake Geneva. When the Second World War began, Godard was in school in Paris, but he was soon sent back to his family in Switzerland, and



"Again? I read you your Miranda rights last night."

he stayed there until the end of the war.

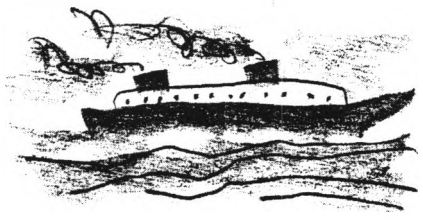
After the Liberation, Godard returned to school in Paris, and in the late nineteen-forties he discovered the Cinémathèque Française. Founded by the young silent-film buff Henri Langlois in 1935, the Cinémathèque included both a collection of films that Langlois had rescued and preserved (at a time when old films were routinely destroyed) and a small screening room where he could show them. It was not the first film museum, but it was the best: Langlois's catholic taste (which ranged from surrealist fantasies to B Westerns) made the Cinémathèque the hub of postwar French movie culture. There Godard and two other faithfuls of the front row—François Truffaut and Jacques Rivette—eventually introduced themselves. The three young devotees soon met two others, a pharmacy student named Claude Chabrol and a man ten years their senior, Maurice Scherer, now known as Eric Rohmer. Godard's interest in film quickly grew into an obsession, fuelled by enthusiastic all-night discussions with his new friends while wandering the streets of Paris. To placate his parents, he enrolled at the Sorbonne as a student in ethnology, but he spent all his time at the movies—sometimes watching three films a day, sometimes watching one film (Orson Welles's "Macbeth," for example) three times in a row, and sometimes, according to Truffaut, watching "fifteen minutes of five different films in one afternoon."

At the same time, Godard was doing his best to keep up with his reading: Truffaut reported that his friend would go to people's apartments and read the first and last pages of forty books. Indeed, Godard had originally wanted to be a novelist, but he felt "crushed by the spectre of the great writers." Then he discovered "other poets," in the cinema: "I saw a film of Jean Vigo, a film of Renoir, and then I said to myself, I think that I could do that too, me too."

During our interview, Godard referred to the New Wave not only as "liberating" but also as "conservative." On the one hand, he and his friends saw themselves as a resistance movement against "the occupation of the cinema by people who had no business there." On the other, this movement had been born in a museum, the Cinémathèque: Godard and his peers were steeping themselves in a cinematic tradition—that of silent films—that had disappeared almost everywhere else. Thus, from the beginning, Godard saw the cinema as a lost paradise that had to be reclaimed.

In 1950, Godard published several articles in a short-lived film magazine edited by Rohmer. Then, in 1952, he began to write for a new, intensely serious magazine, co-founded by the legendary film theorist André Bazin: *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Even his earliest articles displayed the motifs of his future film career: a love for classic American movies, political films, and documentaries; a taste for grandiose speculation and fine phrases; and a conflation of his idea of cinema and his idea of himself. More important, he used his dazzling polymathy to explode the old hierarchies: Hitchcock and Hawks were as great as Eisenstein and Renoir; Eisenstein and Renoir were as great as Voltaire and Cézanne. Godard was already imagining movies that would bring together the commercial cinema, the art cinema, and the whole of Western culture in one madly ambitious body of work—his own.

Godard may have been hatching big plans, but, from his parents' perspective, he was still living like a spoiled adolescent. In 1952, hoping to thrust responsibility on him, they cut him off financially. Unable to support himself with his film criticism, Godard began stealing—from family members, from friends of the family, from the offices of *Cahiers du Cinéma*. His mother managed to find him a job with Swiss television, but he stole from his employers and got caught. His father bailed him out of jail and put him in a mental hospital. (These events are strikingly reminiscent of Truffaut's ordeal in the late nineteen-forties, when he stole a typewriter from his father's office to finance the creation of his own *ciné-club* and his father committed him to a psychiatric "observation center.") After this incident, Godard says, he severed his ties with his family for good.



Shortly afterward, in 1954, Godard went to work on a dam in Switzerland. "I said to myself, 'I'll put some money aside, and in two or three years I'll come back to Paris. I'll manage to make my first film by age twenty-five.' That's the goal that Orson Welles had set." Instead, he rented a camera on his days off, hired a crew, and made a short documentary about the construction of the dam. He then sold it to the construction company and returned to Paris, where he was able to scrape by on the film's profits for several years. Eric Rohmer has written of that period, "Whenever people asked us, 'What do you live on?' we liked to answer, 'We don't live.' Life was the screen, life was the cinema."

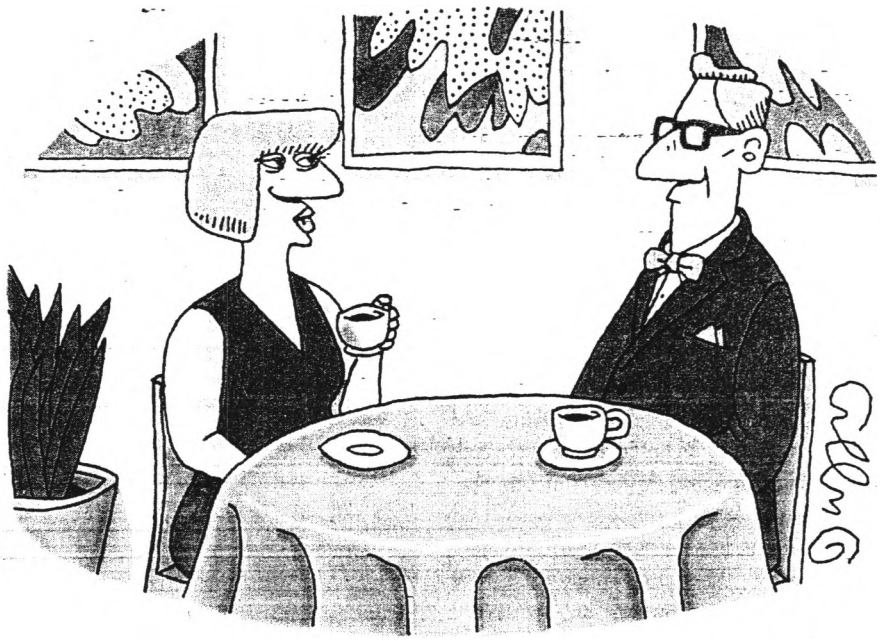
In Paris, Godard resumed his critical writing for *Cahiers du Cinéma* and other journals, made several short films, and took a job as the press agent for the Paris office of Twentieth Century Fox. After a screening there of a film by the French producer Georges de Beauregard, Godard told him, "Your film is shit." This unusual introduction earned Godard an acquaintance that soon proved fruitful: in 1959, following the success of Truffaut's "The 400 Blows," Beauregard agreed to produce Godard's first feature film, on the strength of a story outline written by Truffaut.

From the beginning of his career, Godard crammed more film references into his movies than any of his New Wave comrades. In "Breathless," his citations include a movie poster showing Humphrey Bogart (whose expression the lead actor Jean-Paul Belmondo tries reverently to imitate); a clip from the soundtrack of the classic film noir "Gun Crazy"; visual quotations from films of Ingmar Bergman, Samuel Fuller, Fritz Lang, and others; and an onscreen dedication to Monogram Pictures, an American B-movie studio. Most of all, the choice of Jean Seberg as the lead actress was an overarching reference to Otto Preminger, who had discovered her for his "Saint Joan," and then cast her in his acidulous 1958 adaptation of "Bonjour Tristesse." If, in Rohmer's words, "life was the cinema," then a film filled with movie references was supremely autobiographical.

"Breathless" was the first film to make explicit its relation to the history of cinema, and serious critics and viewers appreciated it as such. Yet the wider audience saw it as a gangster movie, and enjoyed the escapist fantasy—a response that took Godard by surprise. In an interview several years after its release, he said, "Now I see where it belongs—along with 'Alice in Wonderland.' I thought it was 'Scarface.' " The offhandedly self-righteous thug of "Breathless" was not the scarred sociopath of the real underworld (as he had been in Truffaut's original conception); he was a character without psychology, a collection of self-consciously cool gestures copied from the movies.

The offhand behavior of Belmondo's character was mirrored in Godard's approach to film technique. Like an action painter, he discovered a working method that exalted the inspiration of the moment; in fact, the way the shoot was organized was arguably Godard's greatest innovation. He had his cameraman, Raoul Coutard, shoot with a handheld camera and scant lighting, partly for aesthetic reasons and partly to save money but mostly to save time. "Three-quarters of directors waste four hours on a shot that requires five minutes of actual directing," Godard told an interviewer. "I prefer to have five minutes' work for the crew—and keep the three hours to myself for thought." He needed time for himself because he made "Breathless" without a storyboard—indeed, without a script. He and his minimal crew usually shot only in the morning, giving the director the rest of the day to come up with what to do next; when he couldn't come up with anything, they would skip a day of shooting altogether. Jean Seberg, who was used to Hollywood methods, considered quitting after the first day. Two weeks into filming (and not filming), Beauregard thought that Godard was simply wasting money, and threatened to shut down the production, but Truffaut intervened.

In an interview a few years later, Godard was even more explicit about his search for "the definitive by chance": "As I make low-budget films, I can ask the producer for a five-week schedule, knowing there will be two weeks of actual shooting. 'Vivre Sa Vie' took four weeks, but shooting stopped during the whole second week. The big difficulty is that I need people who can be at my disposal the whole time. Sometimes they have to wait a whole day before I can tell them what I want them to do. I have to ask them not to leave the location in case we start shooting again. Of course, they don't like it."



"No, I don't want to change you, Darryl. But, sure, it would be great if you were completely different."

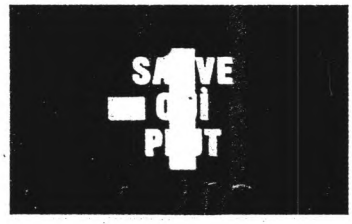
In 1960, a young model ignored a telegram from Godard offering her the lead female role in a film he was making. He had noticed her the year before in a soap commercial and had offered her a small part in "Breathless," which she had refused, because it entailed appearing topless. This time, her friends pushed her to respond. She went to see Godard in his producer's office, in Paris: "He walked around me three times. He looked me over from head to toe and said, 'It's a deal. Come sign your contract tomorrow.' I asked him, haltingly, what the film was about. He answered that there was no script, that it had to do with politics." The actress, Anna Karina, was not yet twenty-one, and Godard had to fly her mother in from Denmark to sign on her behalf.

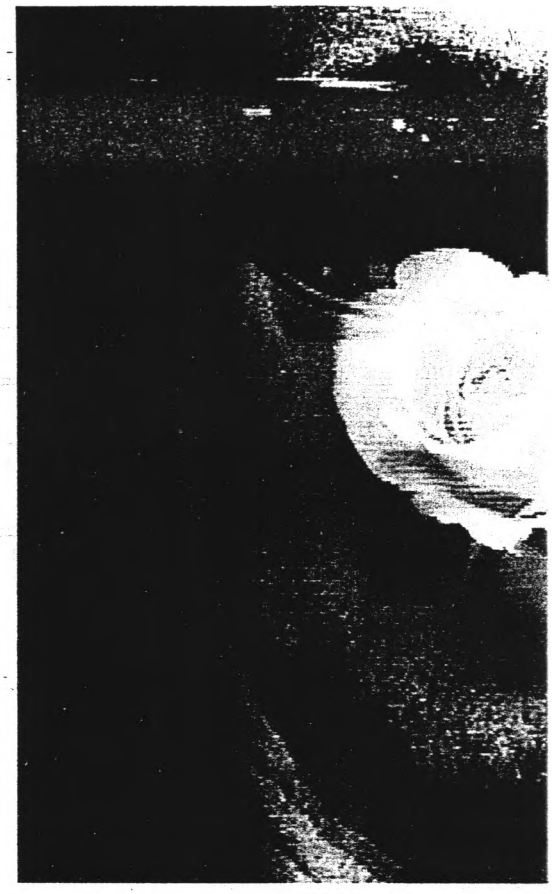
The film, "Le Petit Soldat," opens with the lines "The time for action is over. I have aged. The time for thought is beginning." A painfully personal love story set in the context of the French government's dirty war against Algerian independence fighters and their French sympathizers, the film shows both sides engaging in assassination and torture. As Godard had hoped, it was received badly. The left protested privately; the French government banned the film, blocking its release at home and abroad. "But since I had received death threats in my mailbox," Godard said, "I was glad it was banned." Godard, who had called "Breathless" "a documentary on Jean Seberg and on Jean-Paul Belmondo," here took that notion a step further, asking Anna Karina questions on camera and filming her unscripted answers, a method he expanded and refined in films to come.

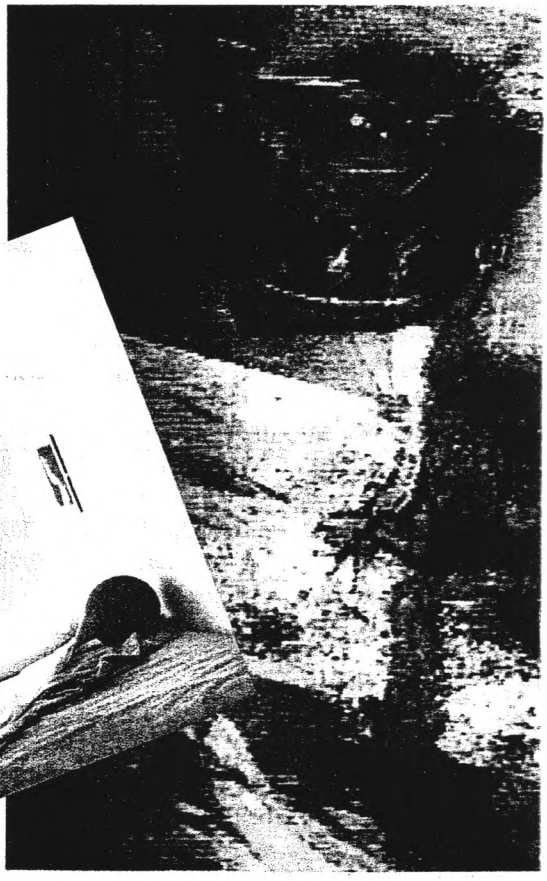
Godard and Anna Karina married in 1961. She starred in many of his subsequent films, including "A Woman Is a Woman," "Vivre Sa Vie," "Alphaville," and "Pierrot le Fou," which used various American movie genres—science fiction, melodrama, romance, the musical—to frame collages of sociology, philosophy, poetry, politics, and outright caprice. The director and his star made a glamorous pair in those years, cruising around Paris in their big Ford, but the marriage was tempestuous. Godard

would often disappear; later, Karina would learn that he had been out of the country. As she put it, "He told me, 'I'm going out for a pack of corn-paper cigarettes,' and he came back three weeks later." In 1964, Jacques Rivette, who had just directed Karina in a stage adaptation of Diderot's "La Religieuse" (which Godard financed), told a journalist, "He and his wife have achieved perfect harmony in destroying each other." The screenwriter Paul Gégauff described paying a visit to the couple, only to find Godard "stark naked" in a freezing-cold room that had been totally destroyed: "All his clothes and Anna's were lying on the ground in tatters, the sleeves slashed with a razor, in a mess of wine and broken glass. . . . I noticed Anna on a sort of dais in the far corner of the room, also quite naked. . . . 'I'd offer you a glass of something,' he said, 'only there aren't any glasses left.' Then: 'Go and buy us a couple of raincoats so that we can go out.' "

Godard thought that Karina was disappointed by the increasingly intellectual path that his film career was taking; he said that "what she really dreamed of was to go to Hollywood." In "Contempt" (1963), a screenwriter accepts an assignment he despises in order to pay for luxuries that he thinks his beautiful young wife, played by Brigitte Bardot, expects. Michel Piccoli, who played the screenwriter, told a reporter at the time, "I'm not the male lead of 'Contempt'—he is. He wanted me to wear his tie, his hat, and his shoes." Raoul Coutard, the film's cinematographer, said, "I am convinced that he is trying to explain something to his wife in 'Contempt.' It's a sort of letter—one that's costing Beauregard a million dollars." (The co-producer Joseph E. Levine concurred: "We lost a million bucks on that lousy film, because that *great* director Jean-Luc Godard refused to follow the script.") Years later, Godard said of Karina,







Godard, opposite page center, with his first wife, Anna Karina, on the set of "A Woman Is a Woman" (1961); scenes from later films; and from the eight-part video series on the cinema which he completed in 1998.

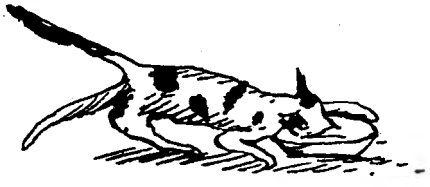
LEFT: "SAUVE QUI PEUT (LA VIE)" [5]; "HAIL MARY" /PHOTOFEST. CENTER AND TEXT: "HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA" (GAUMONT, 1998). RIGHT: "PASSION", "PRÉNOM CARMEN" [3] © RAYMOND CAUCHETIER, "KING LEAR" /PHOTOFEST.

"She left me because of my many faults; I left her because I couldn't talk movies with her." Karina's assessment was slightly different: "As soon as we were happy, he tried to get at us by another means, another path. He provoked a new ordeal. One could have thought that it bored him, happiness." The couple divorced in 1965.

Shortly afterward, Godard made "Masculine Feminine." Though its twenty-year-old characters—"the children of Marx and Coca-Cola"—were from a different world than the thirty-five-year-old director, the film explores the same conflicts between intellect and desire that fuelled "Contempt." In "Waiting for Godard," Michel Vianey's book about the making of "Masculine Feminine," Godard told the writer that finding a woman he was attracted to and could talk to would be ideal, "like having the city in the country."

Godard's next romantic liaison seemed closer to that ideal, but it precipitated his withdrawal from the film industry, and set the hard terms of his self-exile. Anne Wiazemsky was the granddaughter of the French writer François Mauriac, and the lead actress in Robert Bresson's "Au Hasard Balthazar." She and Godard first met after a screening of the rushes, and later, after seeing "Masculine Feminine," she wrote him a letter. At the time, Wiazemsky was a student at Nanterre University, a nexus of leftist activity. Through his acquaintance with her friends there, Godard conceived "La Chinoise" (1967), a film about a cell of young Parisian Maoists who, from the comfort of a borrowed apartment, plot their first terrorist act. The film, which starred Wiazemsky, is also an unromantic love story, involving her character and another cell member. "La Chinoise" was made a year before the legendary student uprisings, and is widely held to be prescient. That summer, Godard married Wiazemsky, who had just turned twenty; later that year, he made "Weekend."

When Godard abandoned the movie industry, in 1968, he was fleeing not just a set of narrative conventions, his own public image, and his newfound cinema "family" but also the entrenched customs of movie production. It was no coincidence that the alternative structure he embraced, a doctrinaire Marxism or Maoism, purported to grant workers control of the means of production and to promote collaborative work—in fact, Godard co-founded a Marxist cinema collective the following year. But one scene in "La Chinoise" suggests the inner price of Godard's doctrinaire ideological allegiance: the hero stands at a blackboard that is covered with the names of famous writers and artists, and erases them one by one, until only the name "Brecht" remains. For a stupendous reader and artistic omnivore like Godard, the scene is the equivalent of intellectual suicide. Describing this period many years later, he told an interviewer, "I didn't read, I didn't go to movies, I didn't listen to music," and added, citing Rohmer, " 'In those years I wasn't alive.' " Ultimately, the reductivism and hortatory optimism of Maoism proved too much. In his semi-apologetic 1972 "Tout Va Bien," Godard presents Yves Montand as a director who left the cinema in 1968, in a moment of doubt, and has been making TV commercials for a living: Godard was making commercials, but for a political product, and he, too, was looking for a way out. By the time the movie appeared, he and Wiazemsky had separated.



When I met Michel Vianey in Paris recently, I reminded him of Godard's quest for a woman he could talk to, and he replied, "Well, he's found her." Godard's thirty-year partnership with Anne-Marie Miéville is a testament to his ongoing attempts to unify filmmaking and domestic life. He first worked with Miéville in 1970, on a film project about Palestinians, and Miéville was closely involved in Godard's rehabilitation after a severe motorcycle accident the following year. In 1973, the couple left Paris for Grenoble, where they put together their own video studio; there they could control productions from start to finish, and incorporate filmmaking into their daily lives. A few years later, they increased their isolation by moving to Rolle.

Between 1974 and 1978, Godard and Miéville collaborated on three films and two video series, all of which are

TESTAMENT: VERMEER IN DECEMBER

To my daughter, Elsbeth, two loaf-sized secret coffers.
To my sons, the pastel seascape.
And the peat chest. And the Spanish chairs, perhaps.
And the ivory-capped cane at rest on my bedstead.
And the sheets, and the ear cushions,

and the seventeen pocket handkerchiefs
that flap at the summons of each dawn's catarrh.
Now and then, through their linen expanse
I revisit my children, in flight down an iced stream,
their sail-pushed sleds clicking, clicking
like a covey of walnut carts. . . .

To my servants, "Bass Viol with Skull."
The wicker cradle. The ash-gray travel mantle.
To the men who will carry my coffin,
glass flasks—six—and a marbled flute

carved from the wing bone of a mute swan.
Its music may offer a tremoloed solace
as they lift from the grave site my infant son.
Two years in the earth, his wooden box, darkened

by marl and a bleeding silt, will ride
my greater other like a black topknot
as we are lowered in tandem down the candlelit walls.

To my wife, the yellow jacket, silk and fur-trimmed,
that warms, through the mirror of a linseed wash,
a hazel-haired woman eternally lit by a pearl necklace.
She carries, with a dabble of madder and burnt ochre,
the wistful, enigmatic gaze of my children

as they circled the pale flute, dreaming, they said, of some
haunted voice, deep in a gliding wing, its song
both shrill and melodic,
like the cry of an infant controlled by a choir.

And to you, in half rings around me, your faces
spaced like pearls . . . Imagine that moment
when the ropes are lowered and something begins
on the lit walls, shape over shape: I leave it to you,
that shadowed conjunction of matter and light
that flies, in its fashion, between us.

—Linda Bierds

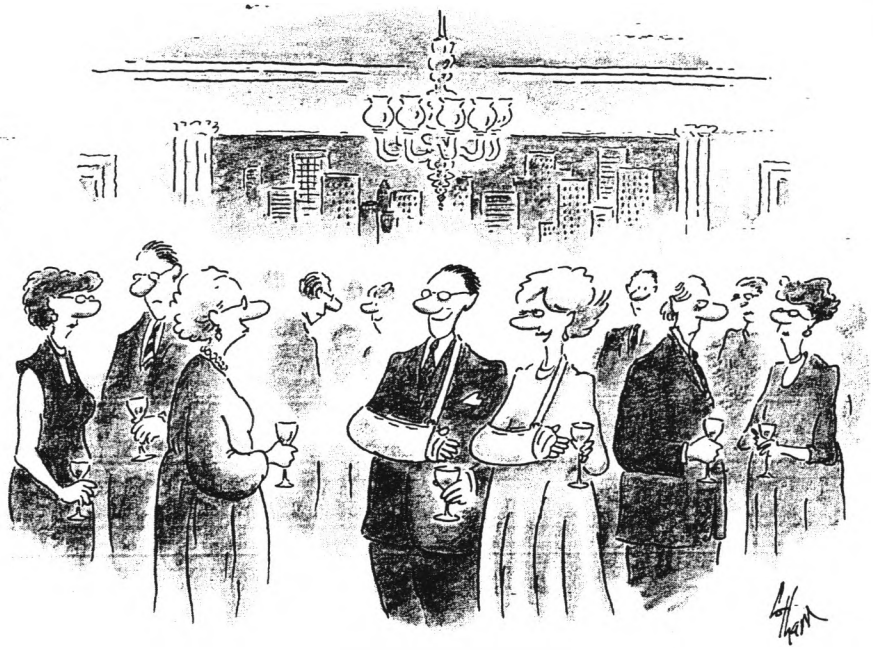
experimental in the best sense of the word—filled with raw thought and technical innovations—and which served Godard as a laboratory of ideas during the decades that followed. In the late seventies, Miéville coaxed Godard to reconnect with the mainstream film industry in order to make "Every Man for Himself"—but he did it on his own terms. He soon began to refer to "Every Man for Himself," which was co-written by Miéville, as his "second first film." Part of the film, at least, was startlingly autobiographical: Jacques Dutronc plays a filmmaker (named Paul Godard) who uneasily follows his girlfriend, also a filmmaker (played by Nathalie Baye), to a new life in the Swiss countryside. As if to confirm the film's role in reëstablishing him in the cinema, Godard says that "Every Man for Himself" was his only commercial success besides "Breathless."

With its first shot, a searching view of wispy clouds and vapor trails in a deep-blue sky, "Every Man for Himself" announces one of the principal motifs of Godard's later films: some of the most sumptuous and awestruck images of nature ever put on film. The presence of nature is simply the presence of Rolle. But the pictorial richness and density can be traced directly to Godard and Miéville's constant video production in the mid-seventies. Now that Godard had his own studio, he was intimate with his tools and was able to exercise a craftsmanlike virtuosity in every aspect of his art. Starting with this film, Godard, like a painter painting the same apples or model or coastline for twenty years, developed most of his full-length projects from increasingly complex elaborations of a small number of obsessive themes, ranging from the grandly philosophical to the painfully intimate.

Foremost among these themes are the moral combat of filmmaking and the material conditions of the art—sometimes exemplified by an actor playing a filmmaker and sometimes by the saturnine presence of Godard himself. In "Passion" (1982), a filmmaker struggles with the artistic, financial, and emotional complications of a large-scale film, the specifics of which he hasn't quite figured out; in "First Name: Carmen" (1983), Godard plays Uncle Jean, an involuntarily idled old filmmaker enjoying his dotage in a hospital; in "Soigne Ta Droite" (1987), a director, again played by Godard, is charged with making a film that must be ready for distribution that very night. Having exhausted the stock of mythical Hollywood heroes in the sixties, and of ideological ones in the seventies, Godard was down to his last hero: himself.

After forming his partnership with Miéville, Godard started managing not only his time but also his budget; his involvement in the art of moviemaking became a matter of business. Generally, his budgets are put directly under his control by the producer, and his take is what is left over. This financial arrangement permits him to bring in people and equipment without regard to specific line items, and lets him shoot and reshoot as he chooses. It also challenges him to put up money when necessary. Yet these contingencies, too, he folds back into his art. "What sets me apart from lots of people in the cinema," Godard has said, "is that money is part of the screenplay, in the story of the film, and that the film is part of money, like mother-child, father-daughter."

Godard has no children of his own—indeed, he has said that making children and making films are mutually exclusive—but children, real or symbolic, have proved central to his later work. As he has pointed out, "Psychoanalysis and cinema were born in the same year." In the early eighties, he began to treat the relations of an older director to his young actresses as a variant of the Freudian scenario of incest: the father's forbidden desire for his daughter becomes the master script for all cinema. A section in "Every Man for Himself," aptly titled "Fear," shows the "Godard" character speaking of his sexual desire for his eleven-year-old daughter. In "First Name: Carmen," a contemporary version of the opera (with Bizet's music replaced by Beethoven quartets performed onscreen), Carmen plays on the incestuous longings of her Uncle Jean to lure him into making a movie that will serve as cover for her band of robbers. And in "Hail Mary" (1985), a modernization of the story of the Virgin Birth, Godard introduces the theme once more. Remarkably, the film that Godard originally proposed to its lead actress, Myriem Roussel, was a non-Biblical drama on the subject of father-



"We slipped in the tub."

daughter incest, in which the male lead would be played by Godard. It was only after Roussel's refusal that, as Godard later said, "it occurred to me: God the Father and his daughter."

But as Godard was taking on the grand themes of Western civilization—European painting, opera, classical music, psychoanalysis, Christianity—the world, particularly the American movie world, was heading in a different direction. In the United States, the appeal of foreign films has always depended on their blend of intelligence and sex, but Godard's movies were unusually demanding intellectually, and the sex wasn't fun. At the same time, after the financial success of Spielberg's "Jaws" and George Lucas's "Star Wars," Hollywood was gearing its movies to the adolescent raised on TV, and the burgeoning American independent cinema likewise offered a more familiar set of references. Even the most striking of the independent films, like Jim Jarmusch's "Stranger Than Paradise," didn't demand a knowledge of Delacroix or Beethoven to be appreciated.

Paradoxically, Godard's reliance on recovered fragments of Western culture lent his films a new emotional depth. Yet his work of the mid-nineteen-eighties was released commercially in the United States with little fanfare—until 1985, when "Hail Mary" generated a controversy too heated to be ignored. Although the film's outward elements seem jokey (Joseph drives a taxi, Mary helps out in her father's gas station and plays on a girls' basketball team), the tone and import of the film are sublime and respectful, and have even suggested to some a powerful, non-dogmatic argument for Christian faith. Many believers, however, were disturbed by other aspects of the film: Mary is shown not only nude but in erotic agony, as if she were in the throes of sexual possession, presumably by the Holy Spirit. The film met with protests, sometimes violent, in cities throughout Europe and the United States. When Pope John Paul II criticized it, Godard responded with a barbed apology, requesting its withdrawal from the Italian market: "It's the house of the church, and if the Pope didn't want a bad boy running around in his house the least I could do is respect his wishes. This Pope has a special relationship to Mary; he considers her a daughter almost."

At the 1985 Cannes Film Festival, flush with his renewed celebrity and notoriety, Godard approached Menahem Golan, of Cannon Films, and asked him to produce a film of "King Lear." Golan agreed, and wrote out a contract on a napkin from the bar where they were meeting, adding one clause: the script would be written by Norman Mailer. Godard was delighted with the plan: "It was King Lear and his daughter Cordelia that I had in mind, a little like God and Mary in the other film." At first, Mailer balked, assuming that Godard was "hell on writers." He was persuaded, he told me, only by Golan's offer to let him direct his own film, "Tough Guys Don't Dance," if he agreed. Godard's first move was to sign Orson Welles as an actor, or "guide"; but after Welles died, later that year, Godard came up with another idea: Mailer himself would play King Lear, and his daughter Kate, an actress, would play Cordelia. This, too, Mailer accepted, with misgivings.

"I finally decided that the only way to do a modern 'King Lear'—because that was what Menahem Golan wanted—was to make him a Mafia godfather," Mailer said. "I couldn't conceive of anyone else in my range of understanding who would disown a daughter for refusing to compliment him. So I turned it into a script I called 'Don Learo' "—pronounced "lay-AH-ro"—"which to my knowledge Godard never looked at." Mailer shouldn't have been surprised, inasmuch as Godard hadn't read Shakespeare's play, either. Instead, Godard admitted, he watched all the available filmed versions of it: "I had a vague idea that there was this girl who says, 'Nothing,' and that was enough."

Although Godard had intended to make the film near Mailer's house in Provincetown, he suddenly summoned Norman and Kate Mailer to Switzerland. "When we got there, to the hotel, he wanted to start shooting right away, and so he started giving me lines, and I was hardly playing King Lear. He said, 'You will be Norman Mailer in this.' And then he gave me some lines, and they were really, by any comfortable measure, dreadful. They would be lines like, I'd pick up the phone and I'd say, 'Kate, Kate, you must come down immediately, I have just finished the script, it is superb'—stuff like that. He was shooting, and we were getting some dreadful stuff. . . . I said to him, 'Look, I really can't say these lines. If you give

me another name than Norman Mailer, I'll say anything you write for me, but if I'm going to be speaking in my own name, then I've got to write the lines, or at least I've got to be consulted on the lines.' So he was very annoyed and he said, 'That's the end of shooting for the day.' "

Godard conceded that the difficulties in their relationship stemmed in part from his way of working ("I don't know very well what I want to do, so he couldn't really have a discussion about it. He had nothing to do but obey, to have confidence in me"), but he also believes that Mailer was hostile to his vision of the film, which was supposed to be like "reportage" of Mailer's relationship with his daughter. "When he saw that he was going to have to talk about himself and his family, it was all over, in a quarter hour," Godard told me. "And that's the little piece that stayed in the film, but he left the next day" (a mutual decision, according to Mailer). To Danièle Heymann, a journalist from *Le Monde* who visited the set, Godard added one fillip: "He left, being unable, he said, 'to see himself represented in a situation of incest.' " When I mentioned this to Mailer, he asked me, "Is it a reasonable demand to ask someone to, in their own name, play that they have an incestuous relationship to their daughter?"

After Mailer quit, Godard asked Rod Steiger, Lee Marvin, and Richard Nixon to play the part; all three turned him down. Finally, he replaced Mailer with Burgess Meredith, and asked Molly Ringwald to come to Switzerland and play Cordelia. Ringwald told me that she was fascinated by Godard's spontaneous working methods, but she freely admitted that she didn't always know what he was up to. She also called attention to an aspect of his films that, she says, is often overlooked—their humor. Ringwald said Godard was "a great joker" on the set, particularly with Meredith: he "short-sheeted Burgess Meredith's bed," and "put fake blood on his bed, too." Heymann had watched Godard set up a shot of Meredith's blood-stained bed, however, and had asked Godard's assistant about it; the assistant explained it as evidence of Cordelia's lost virginity. The scene as filmed includes neither Cordelia nor Lear, and, indeed, Ringwald was unaware of the sexual subtext during the shoot, but in the finished film the incestuous implications are clear.

True to Godard's later style, the film's real story is precisely how to tell the story, or whether it is in fact possible to do so. The film is constructed around a frisky, quizzical character called William Shakespeare, Jr., the Fifth (acted by the theatre director Peter Sellars), who has been hired by the Queen of England to recover the works of his ancestor, which have been lost, along with the rest of culture, in the technological holocaust of Chernobyl. In the course of his tragicomic quest, Shakespeare, Jr., meets a reclusive professor—Godard himself, adorned with jingling dreadlocks made of video cables—who has reinvented the movie theatre in an attempt to rediscover "the image." The professor's ultimate creation is springtime, which he achieves, on Easter Sunday, by reattaching the petals of dead flowers through the miracle of reverse photography—an effort that costs him his life but makes possible the "first image." This image turns out to be a cinematic crystallization of "King Lear" 's most tragic moment: the tableau vivant in which Cordelia lies dead and her father must acknowledge the reality of her death.

Godard's "rediscovery" of Shakespeare is a grand statement about the power of moviemaking—its ability to appropriate and restore all other art forms. Yet "King Lear" makes an even more extravagant claim on behalf of Godard himself: that the cinema has been lost, and that its reinvention, and therefore the rediscovery of all art, is Godard's personal mission. His artistry, he suggests, can even revive nature, making flowers bloom again in spring. The cost may be great, but then the ultimate creator whose work Godard would subsume under his own is God.

Godard has said that he doesn't have a "pile of scripts in a drawer waiting to be filmed." Most of his films are based on stories that come to him on the spur of the moment, once the money is in hand. But one project that weighed on him for decades was a visual history of the cinema, which he started shooting, on video, shortly after he finished "King Lear."

This eight-part series, which the director finally completed in 1998, is called "Histoire(s) du Cinéma." It is not a comprehensive narrative history but a

THAT ELUSIVE PECORINO!

willfully subjective meditation on themes from the cinema that connect speculations about history and culture with an intimate yet cosmic vision of film. In one episode, Godard declares that the cinema "was the only way to make, to tell, to realize: me, that I have an *histoire* in and of myself." The hundreds of video clips that he juxtaposes and superimposes are related by associations that feel as private as those from the mental screen on which the films of his life have been projected.

The first installments of "Histoire(s) du Cinéma" were completed in 1988, and their effect was immediately evident: Godard stopped appearing in his features, and the films—"For Ever Mozart," "Hélas pour Moi," and "New Wave"—displayed a newfound grandeur and classical balance. It is as if the "Histoire(s)" had become the outlet for the irrepressible profusion of thought and the need to give himself voice that marked Godard's earlier work.

As the title suggests, "New Wave" is the story of the French New Wave, albeit treated allegorically. Alain Delon plays identical twins who are never seen together: the film begins with the weak one (who represents earlier directors) being rescued and dominated by a powerful woman (the cinema), who finally does away with him; it ends with the strong one (the New Wave), who finds the woman weakened and puts her troubled affairs in order. The characters speak in poetic phrases borrowed from literature; Godard had his assistant search through dozens of literary works in search of potentially useful phrases. "There isn't a word of mine in it, not a word," Godard told me. "Maybe one word of mine, 'Hello, how's it going'—I think that's all."

He went to the shelf to get me a copy of the CD release of the soundtrack, and asked me if I had seen the new set of CDs, with lavishly illustrated libretti, of "Histoire(s) du Cinéma." I asked him about this diversification. "Everything, everything is cinema," he replied. "Everything is cinema."

"Nice job, Reverend, but I think I'll stick to worshipping my body."

As Godard's films went off in new directions in the early nineties, Godard himself was looking for ways to expand his contacts with the new generation. In 1990, he and Miéville signed a five-year deal to move their studio to the premises of La Fémis, the prestigious film school in Paris, but the arrangement fell through. A few years later, he approached the government-funded acting conservatory of the Théâtre National de Strasbourg about making a film with its students, "The Training of the Actor in France," but both the administration and the students were unreceptive to Godard's ideas. At the same time, his name was floated for a chair in the Collège de France, a French academy similar to the Institute for Advanced Study, but there he also met with opposition. Thrown back on his own resources, Godard was bitter but not surprised. In his self-portrait film, "JLG/JLG" (1994), he contended that art is the exception while culture is the rule. And, he added, "it is part of the rule to want the death of the exception."

Godard has not denied that there was also a financial motive for seeking these institutional connections. He has said that his goal is "to be a filmmaker and state functionary, as in Russia. . . . My dream is to work by the month and by the year." He also told me that he has sold the rights to "three-quarters" of his films to the major French film-production and distribution company Gaumont. "I'm arriving at the end of my life: I haven't made any money, I have nothing put aside," he recently told another interviewer. "No pension, no Social Security. If I have an accident . . ."

In fact, Godard has been making videos on commission since the seventies: his clients have included Britain's Channel 4, France Telecom, the French appliance store Darty, and UNICEF. He told me that one such video, "Les Enfants Jouent à la Russie," from 1993, was commissioned privately by an American producer, who has never shown it. Godard himself has no copy of it. When I mentioned that I had seen it, he said that it must have been "a bootleg." Most recently, he completed a thirteen-minute

piece for the opening ceremony of the 2000 Cannes Film Festival, "The Origin of the 21st Century," a caustic postscript to "Histoire(s) du Cinéma," in which he offers a retrospective view of the twentieth century which juxtaposes clips of feature films with documentary images of the horrors the films failed to respond to. Received with bewilderment at Cannes, it was shown twice last month in a program of short videos at the New York Film Festival. The *Times* review of the program failed to mention it. Both showings sold out.

In 1998, Godard and Miéville made a fifty-minute video, "The Old Place," that was commissioned by the Museum of Modern Art. "We were paid five hundred thousand dollars for it," Godard told me. "Well, I thought, five hundred thousand dollars for a film that we'll finish in two weeks, not bad. But it took us a year to figure out what to do, to find the images, to choose the texts, et cetera. Then, after taxes, the cost of production—what's left?" "The Old Place" has not yet been shown publicly, and Godard wonders why not. He assumes that "they" don't like it: "Maybe they thought I was going to spend a lot of time in the museum, film their collection."

In the film, Godard and Miéville condemn Andy Warhol as a mercenary, reject abstract art as the work of artists who can no longer face history, and divide art into its visual component (starting with fields of flowers) and its political aspect (exemplified by documentary images of suffering). It is a provocative and disturbing work, and someone who views it in one of MOMA's belowground theatres may be moved to take a long, contemplative detour through the streets and the Park before daring to go upstairs to indulge in the museum's collection. I spoke with Mary Lea Bandy, MOMA's curator of film and video, who greatly admires the piece, and is proud to have arranged the commission. She considers Godard "as complex as Picasso or Dante," and says that he is "arguably the greatest living artist." She told me that "The Old Place" is to be shown at MOMA in February. She hopes to persuade Godard to come to New York for the occasion, but she understands his aversion to such events: "He's like a monk who has gone to the monastery to brood. There's a great deal of sorrow in what he's brooding about. The political idealism of socialism has disappointed him, yet he's very angry about the way that capitalism is managing things."

"You were kept after school to review multiplication and division. This is not a date."

I asked Godard about the evolution of his politics. "We were for Mao, but when we saw the films he was making, they were bad. So we understood that there was necessarily something wrong with what he was saying." For Godard, the "reference for measuring, even for politics," is the cinema. He brought up the French farmer José Bové, who has recently become notorious in France for demolishing a McDonald's to protest globalization. "At bottom, I think he's right, but what bothers me with him is that if you show him a film of Antonioni he won't like it. So I'm suspicious. That's how we've stayed, completely, since the New Wave, we movie people. We're pretty sectarian, even 'racist'—in quotation marks, so to speak—in relation to cinema. If nobody makes good films, if nobody can make good films, then it will disappear. But as long as I'm alive it will last—let's say for twenty years."

The coming months will be active ones for Godard. Anne-Marie Miéville's latest film, "After the Reconciliation," which co-stars Godard, had its first press screening last week in Paris; two days later, the filmmakers presented it to high-school students of cinema in Sarlat, in southwestern France. The film will open in Paris and elsewhere in France on December 27th. "The Old Place" will première at the Cinémathèque Française in January, and "In Praise of Love" is scheduled for release in February or March. Meanwhile, Godard has also edited the five hours of "Histoire(s) du Cinéma" into a ninety-minute version, "Moments Choisis," which will be released in French theatres at the beginning of next year.

Nonetheless, this flurry of attention

cannot conceal the fact that, with the completion of "Histoire(s) du Cinéma," which in a way is also the *histoire de Godard* and the *histoire du monde*, Godard has reached a high, remote plateau, from which he appears to be looking for a handdown. He told me that leaving Rolle might be the answer: "We've been saying that it's our studio here, our studio of exteriors, between Geneva and Lausanne. The area is just about the size of Los Angeles, but here there are forests, the lake, snow, mountains, and wind. . . . But now we've had our fill, so to speak, of all these places, so we have to find something else."

After our interview, Godard tossed a black blazer over his T-shirt and invited me to have dinner with him at the restaurant of the hotel where I was staying. We walked downhill from his office to the hotel's broad, pebble-strewn terrace, where there were some fifteen widely spaced tables. Neither patrons nor staff acknowledged the filmmaker in any exceptional way. As we ordered, Godard decried the state of the world, using the cinema as a touchstone: "Before, if you had a little money, you could make a film like Cassavetes. If you had a lot, you could make a film like Kazan. Now they don't know how to do either one. They don't know how because they're not interested. Producers aren't interested in doing cinema, actors aren't interested in doing cinema, doctors aren't interested in doing medicine, psychiatrists—there are still a few who are interested, but that's starting to disappear, too."

Godard ordered a slice of fruit tart for dessert, and when I ordered an espresso he suggested I try a *ristrette* instead, a highly concentrated semi-demitasse, which is a local favorite. He ate the glazed baked fruit off the top of his pastry and grew wistful. "I've been sad for so long that now I'm making an effort to be more contented," he said. "Otherwise, one would have reason to cry all the time." When we parted for the evening, he told me to come by his office the next morning.

At the appointed time, I found curtains drawn over the wall-size window and the glass door, to which a note inscribed "Mr. Brody" was taped. Godard had written that he could not continue the interview because "it was not a real discussion" and was "*flou*"—out of focus, vague—but he wished me a better "game" with people I'd be seeing in Paris. I had been warned that this sort of thing might happen; one acquaintance in Paris had told me, "*Il est déstabilisateur né*"—"He is a born destabilizer."

Returning to the hotel terrace for a coffee, I asked the waitress who had served us the night before whether she had recognized my dinner companion. The woman replied, in a rapid, animated voice, "Oh yes, I know him well. He comes here pretty often, but we leave him alone. People ask us to get his autograph for them, but we don't do it. He doesn't like that. He came here to be in peace, and we leave him in peace. He's a very good customer—he's always contented, he never complains. If all our customers were like that, this would be a dream job."

I had expected that Godard would avoid the hotel that evening, but perhaps I shouldn't have been surprised to see him in the dining room with Anne-Marie Miéville when I went in for dinner. I approached him and said "*Bonsoir.*" He hardly looked at me, and, with a forced smile, emitted a chilling "*Bonsoir.*" Miéville scrutinized me, and then glanced back at him. I thanked Godard for his time, he thanked me and wished me "*Bon voyage,*" and I returned to my table.

From across the noisy room I could hear only Miéville's high, flutelike voice, descanting loudly and emphatically: "Brigitte Bardot . . . Cannes . . . to drop off his screenplay . . . he's waiting . . . budget . . . doing the color timing before the editing. . . ." Occasionally, she would pause, and he would murmur haltingly before she resumed.

The scene reminded me of two films. The first is by Miéville, "We Are All Still Here" (1997), a meditation on a woman's search for "the good man" (adapted from Plato's "Gorgias"), who turns out to be an introverted old actor, played by Godard. The woman prods him into better manners and more patience with worldly foibles, and he endures her tender harangues. The second is "Two Weeks in Another Town," by Vincente Minnelli, which Godard calls one of "the only two good films on the cinema," in which a tyrannical director (played by Edward G. Robinson) clashes with his strong-willed wife, who is nonetheless his only consolation when a producer intrudes on his art. Afterward, when I saw the waitress in the corridor, she said, "You know, he's very unsociable. Very shy and very unsociable. He hardly ever talks. She—his wife—she talks, but not him."

Walking along the lakefront in Rolle in the twilight of the summer evening, I recognized many of the elements of Godard's later films: the lapping of water on rocks; the constant and startlingly various voices of birds; the rhapsodic blue of the sky; the vapor trail of a small, potent airplane; the rustle of leaves in the wind; the short, hollow peal of an ancient church bell; and, most of all, the sense of a last refuge. I also noted the lack of a good movie theatre. I thought again of the filmmaker's plans to leave town, and wondered where he could go.

A move wouldn't be easy, but very little about Godard's professional life feels easy. Godard has put himself in a singularly unenviable position: he has taken the entirety of the cinema upon himself, has identified its survival with his own, has assumed the burden of its fictional forms like the mark of sin. If the new generation of French directors—and, for that matter, American independent filmmakers—feel it unnecessary to confront the history of cinema in their work, it is because Godard has done it for them; they have been freed of the burden of the classical cinema by his sacrifice. At the same time, Godard's highly particularized obsession with the past and future of filmmaking has left him with virtually no share in its present. It is as if he had exchanged his place on earth for his place in history.

As I tried to imagine where Godard could go next, Hawthorne's story of Wakefield came to mind: a man intending to leave home for a week stays away for twenty years and then "entered the door one evening, quietly, as from a day's absence." Although Hawthorne gives the tale an equivocally happy ending, he follows it with a frank declaration of its darker purpose: "Amid the seeming confusion of our mysterious world, individuals are so nicely adjusted to a system, and systems to one another, and to a whole, that, by stepping aside for a moment, a man exposes himself to a fearful risk of losing his place forever. Like Wakefield, he may become, as it were, the Outcast of the Universe." ♦

revelation rivets the attention. This suggests an effort, hardly understood even by these writers, to say what had been left unsaid so often: the reason that the fascinating power of *The Blue Angel* is so continuously compelling.

The commentary which englobes the film, reflecting and fixing its position in the discourse of society, includes in one place and another that famous still of Lola leaning back, grasping her knee, on the stage of the Blue Angel. This still is instructive in a course of distortion and censorship, and is significant for its relation to the fetish and to the insistent swell of the repressed text.

The photograph turns up, among other places, in Herman Weinberg's *Josef von Sternberg*.[15] Weinberg calls it the "most famous of all Sternberg's stills," which is undoubtedly true. I include Weinberg's use of it here in comparison with its appearance in John Baxter's book *The Cinema of Josef von Sternberg*.[16] In Baxter's illustration, the hand of some unknown censor has blacked out the area of the thighs where Lola's pants and garters are, blacked them out and attempted to make it look as if she is wearing a short skirt which casts a strong shadow over her legs and over the barrel on which she is sitting. These versions of the still occur together in *The Blue Angel* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), the translation of the German version of the film; the censored print graces the cover that will be turned to public gaze, and the uncensored occurs among the illustrations (inside).

It should be obvious by now that this pose arrests the instant of fetishization, the instant before the child's glimpse of the female genital organ. Lola's leg tantalizes by almost revealing that anatomic feature. In other words, we are at the instant where it is still possible for the child to believe in the maternal phallus. But if the censor covers the indiscreetly revealed upper legs of Marlene Dietrich as Lola, he also imposes, in the blackness of his ink, his knowledge of what actually exists where the child desires the phallus: nothing, a blank, a gap, the kind of material lacuna which Freud himself came to understand as the formal signification of castration.

Yet censorship could not totally disguise in fact what it could not totally distort in art or in the dream. The concentration of phallic signifiers in this still, placed in a simultaneous relationship, drawn from the film where those relationships are worked out in a complex diachronic vector, defies complete distortion. The censor covers Lola's legs but leaves her in possession of the top hat. The gull still hangs from the wire, and those lascivious cherubs still flit about in the background; both of these function in the film as phallic signifiers, connected on the thread of meaning with the dove that flew out from under Rath's hat. Perhaps most awkward of all, however, for the censor's task is the direction of Guste's gaze, which ensures from inside the still what the eye outside the still will be drawn to.

Notes

1. Henri Lefevre, *The Sociology of Marx*, trans. Norbert Guterman (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972).
2. John Baxter, *The Cinema of Josef von Sternberg* (London: A. Zwemmer, 1971).
3. Herman Weinberg, *Josef von Sternberg* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1967).

4. André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?* trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).
5. Pierre Bost, "Le Cinéma," *Les annales politiques et littéraires*, no. 96 (1 February), p. 130.
6. Ado Kyrou, *Amour, érotisme et cinéma*, ed. Eric Losfield (Paris: Le Terrain Vague, 1966).
7. Olivier Burgelin, in the special issue on Barthes of *L'Arc*, 1974.
8. Sigmund Freud, *Fetishism* (London: The Hogarth Press and The Institute of Pyschoanalysis, Vol. XXI, 1927e).
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. Jacques Lacan, "Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse" trans. Anthony Wilden in *The Language of the Self* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968).
12. Jacques Spitz, "L'Ange Bleu," *La Revue du cinéma*, October 1930, pp. 40–42.
13. Georges Sadoul, *Histoire du cinéma mondial des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Flammarion, 1949).
14. Bosley Crowther, *The Great Films: Fifty Golden Years of Motion Pictures* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1967).
15. Weinberg, *op. cit.*
16. Baxter, *op. cit.*

Movies and Methods vol. 2.
Ed. Bill Nichols
Berkeley + Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1985.

THE VOICE IN THE CINEMA: THE ARTICULATION OF BODY AND SPACE

MARY ANN DOANE

Many critics have lamented the subordination of sound to image. The manifesto of Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Alexandrov attacked just this point, calling for sound that was not merely redundant, whether it was synchronous or not. Certainly, film and television criticism tends to neglect sound, as Charles Altman has already observed. Mary Ann Doane takes a somewhat different approach. Rather than championing a neglected aspect of film, she attempts to describe how sound actually functions, together with image, to support a phantasm—an imaginary body that we attribute to or identify with characters or the film in its entirety. In the latter instance, the film offers itself as the possessor of unity, as an organic totality that sound and image both support. It is not that sound is necessary to achieve such unity—classical sculpture shows that it is not—but rather that the

use of sound is limited to those manifestations that enhance the sense of unity and presence that gives the film "body." (The word appears between quotation marks because the physical body of an actor is quite different from the conceptual body of a film; Doane assumes that our response to both is essentially the same.)

Doane goes on to discuss the characteristics of the different manifestations of sound to which we are accustomed: lip synchronization; certification of a star's "presence" by the mechanical, minimally distorted reproduction of his or her voice, even when he or she is off screen; the spatial localization of speech so that voice and image appear to issue from the same geometric coordinates of the "diegesis" or fictional world; the special qualities and limitations of voice-over (as a disembodied voice of authority or knowledge) and voice-off (as testimony to the unseen presence of an actor's body); and interior monologue. These characteristics are discussed with admirable precision and parallel Edward Branigan's description of point-of-view figures in Part 6.

Doane concludes by stressing an important leitmotif in her argument: the psychoanalytic perspective that suggests particular, hypothetical meanings for image, body, and phantasm. She suggests that the pleasure of hearing, like the pleasure of seeing, is grounded in infantile experience that is formative of the subject. Although Doane includes an important caveat—"This is not simply to situate the experiences of infancy as the sole determinant in a system directly linking cause and effect but to acknowledge that the traces of archaic desires are never annihilated" —her primary argument stresses the determining function of infantile experience through a recasting of Lacan's mirror-phase into an acoustical reflection-phase. The voice of the father disrupts the presumed unity between child and mother, constituting that relationship as the "lost object of desire." The classic cinema, with its construction of a "fantasmatic body," seeks to reassure, to offer the pleasure of presence and plenitude that a more radical cinema might contest.

This description and this proposal leave the other determinants of acoustic pleasure unclear. The other determinants pertain to the noninfantile experiences of social reality and aesthetic order. Although Doane is concerned that the limited use of sound in classic cinema "conceals the work" of the text and thereby performs an ideological as well as a psychoanalytic function, the ideological overtones of her argument, which are both Marxist and feminist, stand in need of further elaboration. Her article's turn toward a psychoanalytic theory of acoustic pleasure is only one of several possible explanatory theories. Bringing several of these theories together would serve to advance us along a line of inquiry opened up by this pioneering examination of sound in the light of psychoanalytic theory.

SYNCHRONIZATION

The silent film is certainly understood, at least retrospectively and even (it is arguable) in its time, as incomplete, as lacking speech. The stylized gestures of the silent cinema, its heavy pantomime, have been defined as a form of compensation for that lack. Hugo Münsterberg wrote, in 1916, "To the actor of

the moving pictures . . . the temptation offers itself to overcome the deficiency [the absence of "words and the modulation of the voice"] by a heightening of the gestures and of the facial play, with the result that the emotional expression becomes exaggerated."[1] The absent voice re-emerges in gestures and the contortions of the face—it is spread over the body of the actor. The uncanny effect of the silent film in the era of sound is in part linked to the separation, by means of intertitles, of an actor's speech from the image of his/her body.

Consideration of sound in the cinema (in its most historically and institutionally privileged form—that of dialogue or the use of the voice) engenders a network of metaphors whose nodal point appears to be the body. One may readily respond that this is only "natural"—who can conceive of a voice without a body?[2] However, the body reconstituted by the technology and practices of the cinema is a *fantasmatic* body, which offers a support as well as a point of identification for the subject addressed by the film. The purpose of this essay is simply to trace some of the ways in which this fantasmatic body acts as a pivot for certain cinematic practices of representation and authorizes and sustains a limited number of relationships between voice and image.

The attributes of this fantasmatic body are first and foremost unity (through the emphasis on a coherence of the senses) and presence-to-itself. The addition of sound to the cinema introduces the possibility of re-presenting a fuller (and organically unified) body, and of confirming the status of speech as an individual property right. The potential number and kinds of articulations between sound and image are reduced by the very name attached to the new heterogeneous medium—the "talkie." Histories of the cinema ascribe the stress on synchronization to a "public demand": "the public, fascinated by the novelty, wanting to be sure they were hearing what they saw, would have felt that a trick was being played on them if they were not shown the words coming from the lips of the actors."[3] In Lewis Jacobs's account, this fear on the part of the audience of being "cheated" is one of the factors which initially limits the deployment of sonorous material (as well as the mobility of the camera). From this perspective, the use of voice-off or voice-over must be a late acquisition, attempted only after a certain "breaking-in" period during which the novelty of the sound film was allowed to wear itself out. But, whatever the fascination of the new medium (or whatever meaning is attached to it by retrospective readings of its prehistory), there is no doubt that synchronization (in the form of "lip-sync") has played a major role in the dominant narrative cinema. Technology standardizes the relation through the development of the synchronizer, the Moviola, the flatbed editing table. The mixing apparatus allows a greater control over the establishment of relationships between dialogue, music, and sound effects, and, in practice, the level of the dialogue generally determines the levels of sound effects and music.[4] Despite a number of experiments with other types of sound/image relationships (those of Clair, Lang, Vigo, and, more recently, Godard, Straub, and Duras), synchronous dialogue remains the dominant form of sonorous representation in the cinema.

Yet, even when asynchronous or "wild" sound is utilized, the fantasmatic body's attribute of unity is not lost. It is simply displaced—the body *in* the film

becomes the body *of* the film. Its senses work in tandem, for the combination of sound and image is described in terms of "totality" and the "organic."[5] Sound carries with it the potential risk of exposing the material heterogeneity of the medium; attempts to contain that risk surface in the language of the ideology of organic unity. In the discourse of technicians, sound is "married" to the image, and, as one sound engineer puts it in an article on postsynchronization, "one of the basic goals of the motion picture industry is to make the screen look alive in the eyes of the audience."[6]

Concomitant with the demand for a life-like representation is the desire for "presence," a concept which is not specific to the cinematic soundtrack but which acts as a standard to measure quality in the sound-recording industry as a whole. The term "presence" offers a certain legitimacy to the wish for pure reproduction and becomes a selling point in the construction of sound as a commodity. The television commercial asks whether we can "tell the difference" between the voice of Ella Fitzgerald and that of Memorex (and since our representative in the commercial—the ardent fan—cannot, the only conclusion to be drawn is that owning a Memorex tape is equivalent to having Ella in your living room). Technical advances in sound recording (such as the Dolby system) are aimed at diminishing the noise of the system, concealing the work of the apparatus, and thus reducing the distance perceived between the object and its representation. The maneuvers of the sound-recording industry offer evidence which supports Walter Benjamin's thesis linking mechanical reproduction as a phenomenon with contemporary society's destruction of the "aura" (which he defines as "the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be"[7]). According to Benjamin,

> [the] contemporary decay of the aura . . . rests on two circumstances, both of which are related to the increasing significance of the masses in contemporary life. Namely, the desire of contemporary masses to bring things 'closer' spatially and humanly, which is just as ardent as their bent toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction.[8]

Nevertheless, while the desire to bring things closer is certainly exploited in making sound marketable, the qualities of uniqueness and authenticity are not sacrificed—it is not any voice which the tape brings to the consumer but the voice of Ella Fitzgerald. The voice is not detachable from a body, which is quite specific—that of the star. In the cinema, cult value and the "aura" resurface in the star system. In 1930 a writer feels the need to assure audiences that postsynchronization as a technique does not necessarily entail substituting an alien voice for a "real" voice, that the industry does not condone a mismatching of voices and bodies.[9] Thus, the voice serves as a support for the spectator's recognition and his/her identification of, as well as with, the star.

Just as the voice must be anchored by a given body, the body must be anchored in a given space. The fantasmatic visual space which the film constructs is supplemented by techniques designed to spatialize the voice, to localize it, give it depth, and thus lend to the characters the consistency of the real. A concern for room tone, reverberation characteristics, and sound perspective manifests a desire to re-create, as one sound editor describes it, "the bouquet that surrounds the

words, the presence on the voice, the way it fits in with the physical environment."[10] The dangers of post-synchronization and looping stem from the fact that the voice is disengaged from its "proper" space (the space conveyed by the visual image), and the credibility of that voice depends upon the technician's ability to return it to the site of its origin. Failure to do so risks exposure of the fact that looping is "narration masking as dialogue."[11] Dialogue is defined therefore, not simply in terms of the establishment of an I-you relationship, but as the necessary spatializing of that relationship. Techniques of sound recording tend to confirm the cinema's function as a *mise-en-scène* of bodies.

VOICE-OFF AND VOICE-OVER

The spatial dimension which monophonic sound is capable of simulating is that of depth—the apparent source of the sound may be moved forward or backward, but the lateral dimension is lacking due to the fact that there is no sideways spread of reverberation or of ambient noise.[12] Nevertheless, sound/image relationships established in the narrative film work to suggest that sound does, indeed, issue from that other dimension. In film theory, this work to provide the effect of a lateral dimension receives recognition in the term "voice-off." "Voice-off" refers to instances in which we hear the voice of a character who is not visible within the frame. Yet the film establishes, by means of previous shots or other contextual determinants, the character's "presence" in the space of the scene, in the diegesis. He/she is "just over there," "just beyond the frame-line," in a space which "exists" but which the camera does not choose to show. The traditional use of voice-off constitutes a denial of the frame as a limit and an affirmation of the unity and homogeneity of the depicted space.

Because it is defined in terms of what is visible within the rectangular space of the screen, the term "voice-off" has been subject to some dispute. Claude Bailblé, for instance, argues that a voice-off must always be a "voice-in" because the literal source of the sound in the theater is always the speaker placed behind the screen.[13] Yet, the space to which the term refers is not that of the theater but the fictional space of the diegesis. Nevertheless, the use of the term is based on the requirement that the two spaces coincide, "overlap" to a certain extent. For the screen limits what *can be seen* of the diegesis (there is always "more" of the diegesis than the camera can cover at any one time). The placement of the speaker behind the screen simply confirms the fact that the cinematic apparatus is designed to promote the impression of a homogeneous space—the senses of the fantasmatic body cannot be split. The screen is the space where the image is deployed while the theater as a whole is the space of the deployment of sound. Yet, the screen is given precedence over the acoustical space of the theater—the screen is posited as the site of the spectacle's unfolding and all sounds must emanate from it. (Bailblé asks, "What would be, in effect, a voice-off which came from the back of the theater? Poor little screen . . ."[14]—in other words, its effect would be precisely to diminish the epistemological power of the image, to reveal its limitations.)

The hierarchical placement of the visible above the audible, according to Christian Metz, is not specific to the cinema but a more general cultural production.[15] And the term voice-off merely acts as a reconfirmation of that hierarchy. For it only appears to describe a sound—what it really refers to is the visibility (or lack of visibility) of the source of the sound. Metz argues that sound is never "off." While a visual element specified as "off" actually lacks visibility, a "sound-off" is always audible.

Despite the fact that Metz's argument is valid and we tend to repeat on the level of theory the industry's subordination of sound to image, the term voice-off does name a particular relationship between sound and image—a relationship which has been extremely important historically in diverse film practices. While it is true that sound is almost always discussed with reference to the image, it does not necessarily follow that this automatically makes sound subordinate. From another perspective, it is doubtful that any image (in the sound film) is uninflected by sound. This is crucially so, given the fact that in the dominant narrative cinema, sound extends from beginning to end of the film—sound is never absent (silence is, at the least, room tone). In fact, the lack of any sound whatsoever is taboo in the editing of the soundtrack.

The point is not that we "need" terms with which to describe, honor, and acknowledge the autonomy of a particular sensory material, but that we must attempt to think the heterogeneity of the cinema. This might be done more fruitfully by means of the concept of space than through the unities of sound and image. In the cinematic situation, three types of space are put into play:

(1) The space of the diegesis. This space has no physical limits, it is not contained or measurable. It is a virtual space constructed by the film and is delineated as having both audible and visible traits (as well as implications that its objects can be touched, smelled, and tasted).

(2) The visible space of the screen as receptor of the image. It is measurable and "contains" the visible signifiers of the film. Strictly speaking, the screen is not audible although the placement of the speaker behind the screen constructs that illusion.

(3) The acoustical space of the theater or auditorium. It might be argued that this space is also visible, but the film cannot visually activate signifiers in this space unless a second projector is used. Again, despite the fact that the speaker is behind the screen and therefore sound appears to be emanating from a focused point, sound is not "framed" in the same way as the image. In a sense, it *envelops* the spectator.

All of these are spaces *for the spectator,* but the first is the only space which the characters of the fiction film can acknowledge (for the characters there are no voices-off). Different cinematic modes—documentary, narrative, avant-garde—establish different relationships among the three spaces. The classical narrative film, for instance, works to deny the existence of the last two spaces in order to buttress the credibility (legitimacy) of the first space. If a character looks at and speaks to the spectator, this constitutes an acknowledgment that the character is

seen and heard in a radically different space and is therefore generally read as transgressive.

Nothing unites the three spaces but the signifying practice of the film itself together with the institutionalization of the theater as a type of meta-space which binds together the three spaces, as the *place* where a unified cinematic discourse unfolds. The cinematic institution's stake in this process of unification is apparent. Instances of voice-off in the classical film are particularly interesting examples of the way in which the three spaces undergo an elaborate imbrication. For the phenomenon of the voice-off cannot be understood outside of a consideration of the relationships established between the diegesis, the visible space of the screen, *and* the acoustical space of the theater. The place in which the signifier manifests itself is the acoustical space of the theater, but this is the space with which it is least concerned. The voice-off deepens the diegesis, gives it an extent which exceeds that of the image, and thus supports the claim that there is a space in the fictional world which the camera does not register. In its own way, it *accounts for* lost space. The voice-off is a sound which is first and foremost in the service of the film's construction of space and only indirectly in the service of the image. It validates both what the screen reveals of the diegesis and what it conceals.

Nevertheless, the use of the voice-off always entails a risk—that of exposing the material heterogeneity of the cinema. Synchronous sound masks the problem, and this at least partially explains its dominance. But the more interesting question, perhaps, is: how can the classical film allow the representation of a voice whose source is not simultaneously represented? As soon as the sound is detached from its source, no longer anchored by a represented body, its potential work as a signifier is revealed. There is always something uncanny about a voice which emanates from a source outside the frame. However, as Pascal Bonitzer points out, the narrative film exploits the marginal anxiety connected with the voice-off by incorporating its disturbing effects within the dramatic framework. Thus, the function of the voice-off (as well as that of the voice-over) becomes extremely important in *film noir.* Bonitzer takes as his example *Kiss Me Deadly,* a *film noir* in which the villain remains out of frame until the last sequences of the film. Maintaining him outside of the field of vision "gives to his sententious voice, swollen by mythological comparisons, a greater power of disturbing, the scope of an oracle—dark prophet of the end of the world. And, in spite of that, his voice is submitted to the destiny of the body . . . a shot, he falls—and with him in ridicule, his discourse with its prophetic accents."[16]

The voice-off is always "submitted to the destiny of the body" because it *belongs* to a character who is confined to the space of the diegesis, if not to the visible space of the screen. Its efficacity rests on the knowledge that the character can easily be made visible by a slight reframing which would re-unite the voice and its source. The body acts as an invisible support for the use of both the voice-over during a flashback and the interior monologue as well. Although the voice-over in a flashback effects a temporal dislocation of the voice with respect to the body, the voice is frequently returned to the body as a form of narrative closure. Furthermore, the voice-over very often simply initiates the story and is subsequently su-

perseded by synchronous dialogue, allowing the diegesis to "speak for itself." In *Sunset Boulevard* the convention is taken to its limits: the voice-over narration is, indeed, linked to a body (that of the hero), but it is the body of a dead man.

In the interior monologue, on the other hand, the voice and the body are represented simultaneously, but the voice, far from being an extension of that body, manifests its inner lining. The voice displays what is inaccessible to the image, what exceeds the visible: the "inner life" of the character. The voice here is the privileged mark of interiority, turning the body "inside-out."

The voice-over commentary in the documentary, unlike the voice-off, the voice-over during a flashback, or the interior monologue, is, in effect, a *disembodied* voice. While the latter three voices work to affirm the homogeneity and dominance of diegetic space, the voice-over commentary is necessarily presented as outside of that space. It is its radical otherness with respect to the diegesis which endows this voice with a certain authority. As a form of direct address, it speaks without mediation to the audience, by-passing the "characters" and establishing a complicity between itself and the spectator—together they understand and thus *place* the image. It is precisely because the voice is not localizable, because it cannot be yoked to a body, that it is capable of interpreting the image, producing its truth. Disembodied, lacking any specification in space or time, the voice-over is, as Bonitzer points out, beyond criticism—it censors the questions "Who is speaking?" "Where?" "In what time?" and "For whom?"

> This is not, one suspects, without ideological implications. The first of these implications is that the voice-off[17] represents a power, that of disposing of the image and of what it reflects, from a space absolutely *other* with respect to that inscribed in the image-track. *Absolutely other and absolutely indeterminant.* Because it rises from the field of the Other, the voice-off is assumed to know: this is the essence of its power. . . . The power of the voice is a stolen power, a usurpation.[18]

In the history of the documentary, this voice has been for the most part that of the male, and its power resides in the possession of knowledge and in the privileged, unquestioned activity of interpretation. This function of the voice-over has been appropriated by the television documentary and television news programs, in which sound carries the burden of "information" while the impoverished image simply fills the screen. Even when the major voice is explicitly linked with a body (that of the anchorman in television news), this body, in its turn, is situated in the non-space of the studio. In film, on the other hand, the voice-over is quite often dissociated from any specific figure. The guarantee of knowledge, in such a system, lies in its irreducibility to the spatio-temporal limitations of the body.

THE PLEASURE OF HEARING

The means by which sound is deployed in the cinema inplicate the spectator in a particular textual problematic—they establish certain conditions for understanding which obtain in the "intersubjective relation" between film and spectator. The voice-over commentary and, differently, the interior monologue

him/her as an empty space to be "filled" with knowledge about events, character psychology, etc. More frequently, in the fiction film, the use of synchronous dialogue and the voice-off presuppose a spectator who *overhears* and, overhearing, is unheard and unseen himself. This activity with respect to the soundtrack is not unlike the voyeurism often exploited by the cinematic image. In any event, the use of the voice in the cinema appeals to the spectator's desire to hear, or what Lacan refers to as the invocatory drive.

In what does the pleasure of hearing consist? Beyond the added effect of "realism" which sound gives to the cinema, beyond its supplement of meaning anchored by intelligible dialogue, what is the specificity of the pleasure of hearing a voice with its elements escaping a strictly verbal codification—volume, rhythm, timbre, pitch? Psychoanalysis situates pleasure in the divergence between the present experience and the memory of satisfaction: "Between a (more or less inaccessible) memory and a very precise (and localizable) immediacy of perception is opened the gap where pleasure is produced."[19] Memories of the first experiences of the voice, of the hallucinatory satisfaction it offered, circumscribe the pleasure of hearing and ground its relation to the fantasmatic body. This is not simply to situate the experiences of infancy as the sole determinant in a system directly linking cause and effect but to acknowledge that the traces of archaic desires are never annihilated. According to Guy Rosolato, it is "the organization of the fantasm itself which implies a permanence, an insistence of the recall to the origin."[20]

Space, for the child, is defined initially in terms of the audible, not the visible: "It is only in a second phase that the organization of visual space insures the perception of the object as *external*" (p. 80). The first differences are traced along the axis of sound: the voice of the mother, the voice of the father. Furthermore, the voice has a greater command over space than the look—one can hear around corners, through walls. Thus, for the child the voice, even before language, is the instrument of demand. In the construction/hallucination of space and the body's relation to that space, the voice plays a major role. In comparison with sight, as Rosolato points out, the voice is reversible: sound is simultaneously emitted and heard by the subject himself. As opposed to the situation in seeing, it is as if "an 'acoustical' mirror were always in function. Thus, the images of entry and exit relative to the body are intimately articulated. They can therefore be confounded, inverted, favored one over the other" (p. 79). Because one can hear sounds behind oneself as well as those with sources *inside* the body (sounds of digestion, circulation, respiration, etc.), two sets of terms are placed in opposition: exterior/front/sight and interior/back/hearing. And "hallucinations are determined by an imaginary structuration of the body according to these oppositions" (p. 80). The voice appears to lend itself to hallucination, in particular the hallucination of power over space effected by an extension or restructuration of the body. Thus, as Lacan points out, our mass media and our technology, as mechanical extensions of the body, result in "planeterizing" or "even stratospherizing" the voice.[21]

The voice also traces the forms of unity and separation *between* bodies. The

the "sonorous envelope" which surrounds the child and is the first model of auditory pleasure. An image of corporeal unity is derived from the realization that the production of sound by the voice and its audition coincide. The imaginary fusion of the child with the mother is supported by the recognition of common traits characterizing the different voices and, more particularly, of their potential for harmony. According to Rosolato, the voice in music makes appeal to the nostalgia for such an imaginary cohesion, for a "veritable incantation" of bodies.

> The harmonic and polyphonic unfolding in music can be understood as a succession of tensions and releases, of unifications and divergences between parts which are gradually stacked, opposed in successive chords only to be resolved ultimately into their simplest unity. It is therefore the entire dramatization of separated bodies and their reunion which harmony supports. (p. 82)

Yet, the imaginary unity associated with the earliest experience of the voice is broken by the premonition of difference, division, effected by the intervention of the father whose voice, engaging the desire of the mother, acts as the agent of separation and constitutes the voice of the mother as the irretrievably lost object of desire. The voice in this instance, far from being the narcissistic measure of harmony, is the voice of interdiction. The voice thus understood is an interface of imaginary and symbolic, pulling at once toward the signifying organization of language and its reduction of the range of vocal sounds to those it binds and codifies, and toward original and imaginary attachments, "representable in the fantasm by the body, or by the corporeal mother, the child at her breast" (p. 86).

At the cinema, the sonorous envelope provided by the theatrical space together with techniques employed in the construction of the soundtrack work to sustain the narcissistic pleasure derived from the image of a certain unity, cohesion, and, hence, an identity grounded by the spectator's fantasmatic relation to his/her own body. The aural illusion of position constructed by the approximation of sound perspective and by techniques which spatialize the voice and endow it with "presence" guarantees the singularity and stability of a point of audition, thus holding at bay the potential trauma of dispersal, dismemberment, difference. The subordination of the voice to the screen as the site of the spectacle's unfolding makes vision and hearing work together in manufacturing the "hallucination" of a fully sensory world. Nevertheless, the recorded voice, which presupposes a certain depth, is in contradiction with the flatness of the two-dimensional image. Eisler and Adorno note that the spectator is always aware of this divergence, of the inevitable gap between the represented body and its voice. And for Eisler and Adorno this partially explains the function of film music: first used in the exhibition of silent films to conceal the noise of the projector (to hide from the spectator the "uncanny" fact that his/her pleasure is mediated by a machine), music in the "talkie" takes on the task of closing the gap between voice and body.[22]

If this imaginary harmony is to be maintained, however, the potential aggressivity of the voice (as the instrument of interdiction and the material support of the symptom—hearing voices—in paranoia) must be attenuated. The formal perfo of s reco in t iema ists ucin only

noise of the apparatus but any "grating" noise which is not "pleasing to the ear." On another level, the aggressivity of the filmic voice can be linked to the fact that sound is directed *at* the spectator—necessitating, in the fiction film, its deflection through dialogue (which the spectator is given only obliquely, to overhear) and, in the documentary, its mediation by the content of the image. In the documentary, however, the voice-over has come to represent an authority and an aggressivity which can no longer be sustained—thus, as Bonitzer points out, the proliferation of new documentaries which reject the absolute of the voice-over and, instead, claim to establish a democratic system, "letting the event speak for itself." Yet, what this type of film actually promotes is the illusion that reality speaks and is not spoken, that the film is not a constructed discourse. In effecting an "impression of knowledge," a knowledge which is given and not produced, the film conceals its own work and posits itself as a voice without a subject.[23] The voice is even more powerful in silence. The solution, then, is not to banish the voice but to construct *another* politics.

Notes

1. Hugo Münsterberg, *The Film: A Psychological Study* (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), p. 49.

2. Two kinds of "voices without bodies" immediately suggest themselves—one theological, the other scientific (two poles which, it might be added, are not ideologically unrelated): (1) the voice of God incarnated in the Word; (2) the artificial voice of a computer. Neither seems to be capable of representation outside of a certain anthropomorphism, however. God is pictured, in fact, as having a quite specific body—that of a male patriarchal figure. *Star Wars* and *Battlestar Galactica* illustrate the tendencies toward anthropomorphism in the depiction of computers. In the latter, even a computer (named Cora) deprived of mobility and the simulacrum of a human form is given a voice which is designed to evoke the image of a sensual female body.

3. Lewis Jacobs, *The Rise of the American Film: A Critical History* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1968), p. 435.

4. For a more detailed discussion of this hierarchy of sounds and of other relevant techniques in the construction of the soundtrack see M. Doane, "Ideology and the Practices of Sound Editing and Mixing," paper delivered at the Milwaukee Conference on the Cinematic Apparatus, February 1978, in *Conference Proceedings* (Fall 1979).

5. *Ibid.*

6. W. A. Pozner, "Synchronization Techniques," *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers* 47, no. 3 (September 1946): 191.

7. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 222.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 223.

9. George Lewin, "Dubbing and Its Relation to Sound Picture Production," *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers* 16, no. 1 (January 1931): 48.

10. Walter Murch, "The Art of the Sound Editor: An Interview with Walter Murch," interview by Larry Sturhahn, *Filmmaker's Newsletter* 8, no. 2 (December 1974): 23.

1 *Th*

12. Stereo reduces this problem but does not solve it—the range of perspective effects is still limited. Much of the discussion which follows is based on the use of monophonic sound but also has implications for stereo. In both mono and stereo, for instance, the location of the speakers is designed to ensure that the audience hears sound "which is roughly coincident with the image." See Alec Nisbett, *The Technique of the Sound Studio* (New York: Focal Press Limited, 1972), pp. 530, 532.

13. C. Bailblé, "Programmation de l'écoute (2)," *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 293 (October 1978), p. 9.

14. *Ibid.* My translation.

15. C. Metz, "Le perçu et le nommé," in *Essais sémiotiques* (Paris: Éditions Klincksieck, 1977), pp. 153–59.

16. Pascal Bonitzer, "Les silences de la voix," *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 256 (February–March 1975), p. 25. My translation.

17. Bonitzer uses the term "voice-off" in a general sense which includes both voice-off and voice-over, but here he is referring specifically to voice-over commentary.

18. Bonitzer, p. 26. My translation.

19. Serge Leclaire, *Démasquer le réel*, p. 64, quoted in C. Bailblé, "Programmation de l'écoute (3)," *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 297 (February 1979), p. 46. My translation.

20. Guy Rosolato, "La voix: entre corps et langage," *Revue française de psychanalyse*, no. 38 (January 1974), p. 83. My translation. My discussion of the pleasure of hearing relies heavily on the work of Rosolato. Further references to this article will appear in parentheses in the text.

21. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1977), p. 274.

22. Hanns Eisler, *Composing for the Films* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), pp. 75–77.

23. Bonitzer, pp. 23–24.

THE AVANT-GARDE AND ITS IMAGINARY

CONSTANCE PENLEY

Recent semiotic work is highly critical of dominant film practice, which, among other things, conceals its own work, presents discours *as* histoire, *and produces relations of voyeurism and fetishism within an imaginary domain structured to reassure the male viewer and underwrite the ideologies of patriarchy and capitalism—no small indictment. Thus, it comes as no surprise that a search for alternative models has ensued, in which what Colin MacCabe calls "*

subversion" in classical narratives would expand into "strategies of subversion." The works of Brecht, Godard, Oshima, and the avant-garde are often cited in this context, and this is where Constance Penley's article makes a valuable contribution.

Penley asks what insight into the political and formal possibilities of avant-garde practice we can gain from recent theoretical developments. She summarizes the work of Malcolm LeGrice and Peter Gidal, two important figures in the English Co-op filmmaking movement, and then compares their political and formal agendas with the theoretical arguments of Christian Metz, Thierry Kuntzel, Raymond Bellour, Jean-Louis Baudry, and Jacques Lacan. In doing so, she offers some dense but comprehensive summaries of considerable value regarding important recent work by these writers. Even more pertinent is her systematic critique of LeGrice and Gidal as insufficiently aware of the fundamentally psychical nature of the cinematic apparatus; of course, she assumes that the French psychoanalytic perspective is essentially correct—a large assumption to be sure. Instead of stopping there, however, Penley proceeds to suggest how a more appropriate "interrogation" of the cinematic apparatus can be based on an emphasis on verbal commentary and a representational impulse at the limits and margins of narrative, not on the idealism of abstract, nonrepresentational materialist or reflexive practices championed by LeGrice and Gidal. She associates the preferred road with Godard, Straub and Huillet, Mulvey and Wollen, Akerman, Duras, Rainer, Mangolte, and Raynal, but she does not examine the relationship between its principles and strategies and those of psychoanalytic semiotics closely enough to demonstrate exactly how the pitfalls that LeGrice and Gidal fail to escape can be avoided. However, Penley's summaries and bibliography provide a useful starting point for such an analysis, which might very well prove extremely instructive in the search for models of film practice that innovate both politically and formally.

•

Recent metapsychological approaches to film and cinema permit useful precisions in thinking the relation of avant-garde strategies to a feminist filmmaking practice. Any juxtaposition of an avant-garde practice and an avowedly political practice is, and has been historically, problematic. We would like to look at some of the presuppositions of a contemporary avant-garde from the point of view of these recent metapsychological studies because we think they can illuminate some of the difficulties often found in the juxtaposition of political and avant-garde practice. We have a contemporary example of a provocative attempt to bring these two practices together in the English Co-op filmmaking movement, often described by its theoretician-filmmakers as a 'structural/materialist' cinema aiming towards a 'politics of perception'. This movement sees its political efficacy in offering a cinematic experience completely outside of and against the strategies and effects of dominant classical cinema, i. e., an identification with the characters and diegesis capable of manipulating the spectator in ways which leave

as good. Compare these with a list of successful films and you will have before your eyes an example of the perennial argument about official art . . .

6 Robert Lachenay: between 1953 and 1956 Truffaut wrote quite often in *Cahiers* under this pseudonym: the choice of name would seem to derive from the main character in Renoir's *La Règle du jeu*, Robert de la Chesnaye.
7 Truffaut did of course return to the continuing story of Antoine Doinel, as played by Jean-Pierre Léaud, in *Antoine et Colette* (episode in the film *L'Amour à vingt ans*, 1962), *Baisers volés* (1968), *Domicile conjugale* (1970), *L'Amour en fuite* (1979).
8 François Truffaut, 'La Main de Marilyn', *Cahiers* 57, March 1956, translated as 'The Seven Year Itch' in Truffaut, *Films in My Life*, pp. 159–61.
9 Truffaut, *Cahiers* 83, *op. cit.*

Cahiers du cinéma : The 1950s -
Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave
ed. Jim Hillier
Cambridge, Mass: Harvard U. Press,
1985

6 Jean Domarchi, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, Jean-Luc Godard, Pierre Kast, Jacques Rivette, Eric Rohmer: 'Hiroshima, notre amour'

('Hiroshima, notre amour', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 97, July 1959 (extracts))

In Cahiers no. 71 *some of our editorial board held the first round-table discussion on the then critical question of French cinema. Today the release of* Hiroshima mon amour *is an event which seems important enough to warrant a new discussion.*

Rohmer: I think everyone will agree with me if I start by saying that *Hiroshima* is a film about which you can say everything.
Godard: So let's start by saying that it's literature.
Rohmer: And a kind of literature that is a little dubious, in so far as it imitates the American school that was so fashionable in Paris after 1945.
Kast: The relationship between literature and cinema is neither good nor clear. I think all that one can say is that literary people have a kind of confused contempt for the cinema, and film people suffer from a confused feeling of inferiority. The uniqueness of *Hiroshima* is that the Marguerite Duras–Alain Resnais collaboration is an exception to the rule I have just stated.
Godard: Then we can say that the very first thing that strikes you about this film is that it is totally devoid of any cinematic references. You can describe *Hiroshima* as Faulkner plus Stravinsky, but you can't identify it as such and such a film-maker plus such and such another.
Rivette: Maybe Resnais's film doesn't have any specific cinematic references, but I think you can find references that are oblique and more profound, because it's a film that recalls Eisenstein, in the sense that you can see some of Eisenstein's ideas put into practice and, moreover, in a very new way.
Godard: When I said there were no cinematic references, I meant that seeing *Hiroshima* gave one the impression of watching a film that would have been quite inconceivable in terms of what one was already familiar with in the cinema. For instance, when you see *India* you know that you'll be surprised, but you are more or less anticipating that surprise.

Similarly, I know that *Le Testament du docteur Cordelier* will surprise me, just as *Eléna et les hommes* did. However, with *Hiroshima* I feel as if I am seeing something that I didn't expect at all.

[. . .]

Rohmer: Suppose we talk a bit about *Toute la mémoire du monde*. As far as I'm concerned it is a film that is still rather unclear. *Hiroshima* has made certain aspects of it clearer for me, but not all.

Rivette: It's without doubt the most mysterious of all Resnais's short films. Through its subject, which is both very modern and very disturbing, it echoes what Renoir said in his interviews with us, that the most crucial thing that's happening to our civilization is that it is in the process of becoming a civilization of specialists. Each one of us is more and more locked into his own little domain, and incapable of leaving it. There is no one nowadays who has the capacity to decipher both an ancient inscription and a modern scientific formula. Culture and the common treasure of mankind have become the prey of the specialists. I think that was what Resnais had in mind when he made *Toute la mémoire du monde*. He wanted to show that the only task necessary for mankind in the search for that unity of culture was, through the work of every individual, to try to reassemble the scattered fragments of the universal culture that is being lost. And I think that is why *Toute la mémoire du monde* ended with those higher and higher shots of the central hall, where you can see each reader, each researcher in his place, bent over his manuscript, yet all of them side by side, all in the process of trying to assemble the scattered pieces of the mosaic, to find the lost secret of humanity; a secret that is perhaps called happiness.

Domarchi: When all is said and done, it is a theme not so far from the theme of *Hiroshima*. You've been saying that on the level of form Resnais comes close to Eisenstein, but it's just as much on the level of content too, since both attempt to unify opposites, or in other words their art is dialectical.

Rivette: Resnais's great obsession, if I may use that word, is the sense of the splitting of primary unity – the world is broken up, fragmented into a series of tiny pieces, and it has to be put back together again like a jigsaw. I think that for Resnais this reconstitution of the pieces operates on two levels. First on the level of content, of dramatization. Then, I think even more importantly, on the level of the idea of cinema itself. I have the impression that for Alain Resnais the cinema consists in attempting to create a whole with fragments that are *a priori* dissimilar. For example, in one of Resnais's films two concrete phenomena which have no logical or dramatic connection are linked solely because they are both filmed in tracking shots at the same speed.

Godard: You can see all that is Eisensteinian about *Hiroshima* because it is in fact the very idea of montage, its definition even.

Rivette: Yes. Montage, for Eisenstein as for Resnais, consists in rediscovering unity from a basis of fragmentation, but without concealing the fragmentation in doing so; on the contrary, emphasizing it by emphasizing the autonomy of the shot.

It's a double movement – emphasizing the autonomy of the shot and simultaneously seeking within that shot a strength that will enable it to enter into a relationship with another or several other shots, and in this way eventually form a unity. But don't forget, this unity is no longer that of classic continuity. It is a unity of contrasts, a dialectical unity as Hegel and Domarchi would say. (*Laughter*.)

Doniol-Valcroze: A reduction of the disparate.

Rohmer: To sum up, Alain Resnais is a cubist. I mean that he is the first modern film-maker of the sound film. There were many modern film-makers in silent films: Eisenstein, the Expressionists, and Dreyer too. But I think that sound films have perhaps been more classical than silents. There has not yet been any profoundly modern cinema that attempts to do what cubism did in painting and the American novel in literature, in other words a kind of reconstitution of reality out of a kind of splintering which could have seemed quite arbitrary to the uninitiated. And on this basis one could explain Resnais's interest in *Guernica*, which is one of Picasso's cubist paintings for all that it isn't true cubism but more like a return to cubism – and also the fact that Faulkner or Dos Passos may have been the inspiration, even if it was by way of Marguerite Duras.

Kast: From what we can see, Resnais didn't ask Marguerite Duras for a piece of second-rate literary work meant to be 'turned into a film', and conversely she didn't suppose for a second that what she had to say, to write, might be beyond the scope of the cinema. You have to go very far back in the history of the cinema, to the era of great naïveté and great ambitions – relatively rarely put into practice – to someone like a Delluc, in order to find such a will to make no distinction between the literary purpose and the process of cinematic creation.

Rohmer: From that point of view the objection that I made to begin with would vanish – one could have reproached some film-makers with taking the American novel as their inspiration – on the grounds of its superficiality. But since here it's more a question of a profound equivalence, perhaps *Hiroshima* really is a totally new film. That calls into question a thesis which I confess was mine until now and which I can just as soon abandon without any difficulty (*laughter*), and that is the classicism of the cinema in relation to the other arts. There is no doubt that the cinema also could just as soon leave behind its classical period to enter a modern period. I think that in a few years, in ten, twenty or thirty years, we shall know whether *Hiroshima* was the most important film since the war, the first modern film of sound cinema, or whether it was possibly less important than we thought. In any case it is an extremely important film, but it could be that it will even gain stature with the years. It could be, too, that it will lose a little.

Godard: Like *La Règle du jeu* on the one hand and films like *Quai des brumes*

or *Le Jour se lève* on the other. Both of Carné's films are very, very important, but nowadays they are a tiny bit less important than Renoir's film.

Rohmer: Yes. And on the grounds that I found some elements in *Hiroshima* less seductive than others, I reserve judgment. There was something in the first few frames that irritated me. Then the film very soon made me lose this feeling of irritation. But I can understand how one could like and admire *Hiroshima* and at the same time find it quite jarring in places.

Doniol-Valcroze: Morally or aesthetically?

Godard: It's the same thing. Tracking shots are a question of morality.[1]

Kast: It's indisputable that *Hiroshima* is a literary film. Now, the epithet 'literary' is the supreme insult in the everyday vocabulary of the cinema. What is so shattering about *Hiroshima* is its negation of this connotation of the word. It's as if Resnais had assumed that the greatest cinematic ambition had to coincide with the greatest literary ambition. By substituting pretension for ambition you can beautifully sum up the reviews that have appeared in several newspapers since the film came out. Resnais's initiative was intended to displease all those men of letters – whether they're that by profession or aspiration – who have no love for anything in the cinema that fails to justify the unformulated contempt in which they already hold it. The total fusion of the film with its script is so obvious that its enemies instantly understood that it was precisely at this point that the attack had to be made: granted, the film is beautiful, but the text is so literary, so uncinematic, etc., etc. In reality I can't see at all how one can even conceive of separating the two.

Godard: Sacha Guitry would be very pleased with all that.

Doniol-Valcroze: No one sees the connection.

Godard: But it's there. The text, the famous false problem of the text and the image. Fortunately we have finally reached the point where even the literary people, who used to be of one accord with the provincial exhibitors, are no longer of the opinion that the important thing is the image. And that is what Sacha Guitry proved a long time ago. I say 'proved' advisedly. Because Pagnol, for example, wasn't able to prove it. Since Truffaut isn't with us I am very happy to take his place by incidentally making the point that *Hiroshima* is an indictment of all those who did not go and see the Sacha Guitry retrospective at the Cinémathèque.[2]

Doniol-Valcroze: If that's what Rohmer meant by the irritating side of the film, I acknowledge that Guitry's films have an irritating side.

[. . .]

Essentially, more than the feeling of watching a really adult woman in a film for the first time, I think that the strength of the Emmanuelle Riva character is that she is a woman who isn't aiming at an adult's psychology, just as in *Les 400 Coups* little Jean-Pierre Léaud wasn't aiming at a child's psychology, a style of behaviour prefabricated by professional scriptwriters. Emmanuelle Riva is a modern adult woman

because she is not an adult woman. Quite the contrary, she is very childish, motivated solely by her impulses and not by her ideas. Antonioni was the first to show us this kind of woman.

Rohmer: Have there already been adult women in the cinema?

Domarchi: Madame Bovary.

Godard: Renoir's or Minnelli's?

Domarchi: It goes without saying. (*Laughter.*) Let's say Eléna, then.

Rivette: Eléna is an adult woman in the sense that the female character played by Ingrid Bergman[3] is not a classic character, but of a classic modernism, like Renoir's or Rossellini's. Eléna is a woman to whom sensitivity matters, instinct and all the deep mechanisms matter, but they are contradicted by reason, the intellect. And that derives from classic psychology in terms of the interplay of the mind and the senses. While the Emmanuelle Riva character is that of a woman who is not irrational, but is not-rational. She doesn't understand herself. She doesn't analyse herself. Anyway, it is a bit like what Rossellini tried to do in *Stromboli*. But in *Stromboli* the Bergman character was clearly delineated, an exact curve. She was a 'moral' character. Instead of which the Emmanuelle Riva character remains voluntarily blurred and ambiguous. Moreover, that is the theme of *Hiroshima*: a woman who no longer knows where she stands, who no longer knows who she is, who tries desperately to redefine herself in relation to Hiroshima, in relation to this Japanese man, and in relation to the memories of Nevers that come back to her. In the end she is a woman who is starting all over again, going right back to the beginning, trying to define herself in existential terms before the world and before her past, as if she were once more unformed matter in the process of being born.

Godard: So you could say that *Hiroshima* is Simone de Beauvoir that works.

Domarchi: Yes. Resnais is illustrating an existentialist conception of psychology.

Doniol-Valcroze: As in *Journey into Autumn* or *So Close to Life*,[4] but elaborated and done more systematically.

[. . .]

Domarchi: In fact, in a sense *Hiroshima* is a documentary on Emmanuelle Riva. I would be interested to know what she thinks of the film.

Rivette: Her acting takes the same direction as the film. It is a tremendous effort of *composition*. I think that we are again locating the schema I was trying to draw out just now: an endeavour to fit the pieces together again; within the consciousness of the heroine, an effort on her part to regroup the various elements of her persona and her consciousness in order to build a whole out of these fragments, or at least what have become interior fragments through the shock of that meeting at Hiroshima. One would be right in thinking that the film has a double beginning after the bomb; on the one hand, on the plastic level and the intellectual level, since the film's first image is the abstract image of the coup[illegible] wh[illegible] the s[illegible]er of [illegible]es fa[illegible] and [illegible]ntire[illegible] inni[illegible]

simply a meditation on Hiroshima after the explosion of the bomb. But you can say too that, on another level, the film begins after the explosion *for Emmanuelle Riva*, since it begins after the shock which has resulted in her disintegration, dispersed her social and psychological personality, and which means that it is only later that we guess, through what is implied, that she is married, has children in France, and is an actress – in short, that she has a structured life. At Hiroshima she experiences a shock, she is hit by a 'bomb' which explodes her consciousness, and for her from that moment it becomes a question of finding herself again, re-composing herself. In the same way that Hiroshima had to be rebuilt after atomic destruction, Emmanuelle Riva in Hiroshima is going to try to reconstruct *her* reality. She can only achieve this through using the synthesis of the present and the past, what she herself has discovered at Hiroshima and what she has experienced in the past at Nevers.

Doniol-Valcroze: What is the meaning of the line that keeps being repeated by the Japanese man at the beginning of the film: 'No, you saw nothing at Hiroshima'?

Godard: It has to be taken in the simplest sense. She saw nothing because she wasn't there. Nor was he. However, he also tells her that she has seen nothing of Paris, yet she is a Parisian. The point of departure is the moment of awareness, or at the very least the desire to become aware. I think Resnais has filmed the novel that the young French novelists are all trying to write, people like Butor, Robbe-Grillet, Bastide and of course Marguerite Duras. I can remember a radio programme where Régis Bastide was talking about *Wild Strawberries* and he suddenly realized that the cinema had managed to express what he thought belonged exclusively in the domain of literature, and that the problems which he, as a novelist, was setting himself had already been solved by the cinema without its even needing to pose them for itself. I think it's a very significant point.

Kast: We've already seen a lot of films that parallel the novel's rules of construction. *Hiroshima* goes further. We are at the very core of a reflection on the narrative form itself. The passage from the present to the past, the persistence of the past in the present, are here no longer determined by the subject, the plot, but by pure lyrical movements. In reality, *Hiroshima* evokes the essential conflict between the plot and the novel. Nowadays there is a gradual tendency for the novel to get rid of the psychological plot. Alain Resnais's film is completely bound up with this modification of the structures of the novel. The reason for this is simple. There is no action, only a kind of double endeavour to understand what a love story can mean. First at the level of individuals, in a kind of long struggle between love and its own erosion through the passage of time. As if love, at the very instant it happens, were already threatened with being forgotten and destroyed. Then, also, at the level of the connections between an individual experience and an objective historical and social situation. The love of these anonymous characters

is not located on the desert island usually reserved for games of passion. It takes place in a specific context, which only accentuates and underlines the horror of contemporary society. 'Enmeshing a love story in a context which takes into account knowledge of the unhappiness of others,' Resnais says somewhere. His film is not made up of a documentary on Hiroshima stuck on to a plot, as has been said by those who don't take the time to look at things properly. For Titus and Bérénice in the ruins of Hiroshima are inescapably no longer Titus and Bérénice.

Rohmer: To sum up, it is no longer a reproach to say that this film is literary, since it happens that *Hiroshima* moves not in the wake of literature but well in advance of it.[5] There are certainly specific influences: Proust, Joyce, the Americans, but they are assimilated as they would be by a young novelist writing his first novel, a first novel that would be an event, a date to be accorded significance, because it would mark a step forward.

Godard: The profoundly literary aspect perhaps also explains the fact that people who are usually irritated by the cinema within the cinema, while the theatre within the theatre or the novel within the novel don't affect them in the same way, are not irritated by the fact that in *Hiroshima* Emmanuelle Riva plays the part of a film actress who is in fact involved in making a film.

Doniol-Valcroze: I think it is a device of the script, and on Resnais's part there are deliberate devices in the handling of the subject. In my opinion Resnais was very much afraid that his film might be seen as nothing more than a propaganda film. He didn't want it to be potentially useful for any specific political ends. This may be marginally the reason why he neutralized a possible 'fighter for peace' element through the girl having her head shaved after the Liberation. In any case he thereby gave a political message its deep meaning instead of its superficial meaning.

Domarchi: It is for this same reason that the girl is a film actress. It allows Resnais to raise the question of the anti-atomic struggle at a secondary level, and, for example, instead of showing a real march with people carrying placards, he shows a filmed reconstruction of a march during which, at regular intervals, an image comes up to remind the viewers that it is a film they are watching.

Rivette: It is the same intellectual strategy as Pierre Klossowski used in his first novel, *La Vocation suspendue*. He presented his story as the review of a book that had been published earlier. Both are a double movement of consciousness, and so we come back again to that key word, which is at the same time a vogue word: dialectic – a movement which consists in presenting the thing and at the same time an act of distancing in relation to that thing, in order to be critical – in other words, denying it and affirming it. To return to the same example, the march, instead of being a creation of the director, becomes an objective fact that is filmed twice over by the director. For Klossowski and for Resnais the

problem is to give the readers or the viewers the sensation that what they are going to read or to see is not an author's creation but an element of the real world. Objectivity, rather than authenticity, is the right word to characterize this intellectual strategy, since the film-maker and the novelist look from the same vantage-point as the eventual reader or viewer.

[. . .]

Since we are in the realm of aesthetics, as well as the reference to Faulkner, I think it just as pertinent to mention a name that in my opinion has an indisputable connection with the narrative technique of *Hiroshima*: Stravinsky. The problems which Resnais sets himself in film are parallel to those that Stravinsky sets himself in music. For example, the definition of music given by Stravinsky – an alternating succession of exaltation and repose – seems to me to fit Alain Resnais's film perfectly. What does it mean? The search for an equilibrium superior to all the individual elements of creativity. Stravinsky systematically uses contrasts and simultaneously, at the very point where they are used, he brings into relief what it is that unites them. The principle of Stravinsky's music is the perpetual rupture of the rhythm. The great novelty of *The Rite of Spring* was its being the first musical work where the rhythm was systematically varied. Within the field of rhythm, not tone, it was already almost serial music, made up of rhythmical oppositions, structures and series. And I get the impression that this is what Resnais is aiming at when he cuts together four tracking shots, then suddenly a static shot, two static shots and back to a tracking shot. Within the juxtaposition of static and tracking shots he tries to find what unites them. In other words he is seeking simultaneously an effect of opposition and an effect of profound unity.

Godard: It's what Rohmer was saying before. It's Picasso, but it isn't Matisse.

Domarchi: Matisse – that's Rossellini.[6] (*Laughter.*)

Rivette: I find it is even more Braque than Picasso, in the sense that Braque's entire *œuvre* is devoted to that particular reflection, while Picasso's is tremendously diverse. Orson Welles would be more like Picasso, while Alain Resnais is close to Braque to the degree that the work of art is primarily a reflection in a particular direction.

Godard: When I said Picasso I was thinking mainly of the colours.

Rivette: Yes, but Braque too. He is a painter who wants both to soften strident colours and make soft colours violent. Braque wants bright yellow to be soft and Manet grey to be sharp. Well now, we've mentioned quite a few 'names', so you can see just how cultured we are. *Cahiers du Cinéma* is true to form, as always. (*Laughter.*)

Godard: There is one film that must have given Alain Resnais something to think about, and what's more, he edited it: *La Pointe courte*.

Rivette: Obviously. But I don't think it's being false to Agnès Varda to say that by virtue of the fact that Resnais edited *La Pointe courte* his editing

itself contained a reflection on what Agnès Varda had intended. To a certain degree *Agnèsvarda* becomes a fragment of Alain Resnais, and *Chrismarker* too.[7]

Doniol-Valcroze: Now's the time to bring up Alain Resnais's 'terrible tenderness' which makes him devour his own friends by turning them into moments in his personal creativity. Resnais is Saturn. And that's why we all feel quite weak when we are confronted with him.

Rohmer: We have no wish to be devoured. It's lucky that he stays on the Left Bank of the Seine and we keep to the Right Bank.[8]

Godard: When Resnais shouts 'Action', his sound engineer replies 'Saturn' ['ça tourne', i.e. 'it's rolling']. (*Laughter.*) Another thing – I'm thinking of an article by Roland Barthes on *Les Cousins* where he more or less said that these days talent had taken refuge in the right. Is *Hiroshima* a left-wing film or a right-wing film?

Rivette: Let's say that there has always been an aesthetic left, the one Cocteau talked about and which, furthermore, according to Radiguet, had to be contradicted, so that in its turn that contradiction could be contradicted, and so on. As far as I'm concerned, if *Hiroshima* is a left-wing film it doesn't bother me in the slightest.

Rohmer: From the aesthetic point of view modern art has always been positioned to the left. But just the same, there's nothing to stop one thinking that it's possible to be modern without necessarily being left-wing. In other words, it is possible, for example, to reject a particular conception of modern art and regard it as out of date, not in the same but, if you like, in the opposite sense to dialectics. With regard to the cinema one shouldn't consider its evolution solely in terms of chronology. For example, the history of the sound film is very unclear in comparison with the history of the silent film. That's why even if Resnais has made a film that's ten years ahead of its time, it's wrong to assume that in ten years' time there will be a Resnais period that will follow on from the present one.

Rivette: Obviously, since if Resnais is ahead of his time he does it by remaining true to *October*, in the same way that Picasso's *Las Meninas* is true to Velazquez.

Rohmer: Yes. *Hiroshima* is a film that plunges at the same time into the past, the present and the future. It has a very strong sense of the future, particularly the anguish of the future.

Rivette: It's right to talk about the science-fiction element in Resnais. But it's also wrong, because he is the only film-maker to convey the feeling that he has already reached a world which in other people's eyes is still futuristic. In other words he is the only one to know that we are already in the age where science-fiction has become reality. In short, Alain Resnais is the only one of us who truly lives in 1959. With him the word 'science-fiction' loses all its pejorative and childish associations because Resnais is able to see the modern world as it is. Like the science-fiction writers he is able to show us all that is frightening in it, but also all that

is human. Unlike the Fritz Lang of *Metropolis* or the Jules Verne of *Cinq cents millions de la Bégum*, unlike the classic notion of science-fiction as expressed by a Bradbury or a Lovecraft or even a Van Vogt – all reactionaries in the end – it is very obvious that Resnais possesses the great originality of not *reacting* inside science-fiction. Not only does he opt for this modern and futuristic world, not only does he accept it, but he analyses it deeply, with lucidity and with love. Since this is the world in which we live and love, then for Resnais it is this world that is good, just and true.

Domarchi: That brings us back to this idea of *terrible tenderness* that is at the centre of Resnais's reflection. Essentially it is explained by the fact that for him society is characterized by a kind of anonymity. The wretchedness of the world derives from the fact of being struck down without knowing who is the aggressor. In *Nuit et brouillard* the commentary points out that some guy born in Carpentras or Brest has no idea that he is going to end up in a concentration camp, that already his fate is sealed. What impresses Resnais is that the world presents itself like an anonymous and abstract force that strikes where it likes, anywhere, and whose will cannot be determined in advance. It is out of this conflict between individuals and a totally anonymous universe that is born a tragic vision of the world. That is the first stage of Resnais's thought. Then there comes a second stage which consists in channelling this first movement. Resnais has gone back to the romantic theme of the conflict between the individual and society, so dear to Goethe and his imitators, as it was to the nineteenth-century English novelists. But in their works it was the conflict between a man and palpable social forms that was clearly defined, while in Resnais there is none of that. The conflict is represented in a completely abstract way; it is between man and the universe. One can then react in an extremely *tender* way towards this state of affairs. I mean that it is no longer necessary to be indignant, to protest or even to explain. It is enough to show things without any emphasis, very subtly. And subtlety has always characterized Alain Resnais.

Rivette: Resnais is sensitive to the current abstract nature of the world. The first movement of his films is to state this abstraction. The second is to overcome this abstraction by reducing it through itself, if I may put it that way; by juxtaposing with each abstraction another abstraction in order to rediscover a concrete reality through the very act of setting them in relation to one another.

Godard: That's the exact opposite of Rossellini's procedure – he was outraged because abstract art had become official art.[9] So Resnais's tenderness is metaphysical, it isn't Christian. There is no notion of charity in his films.

Rivette: Obviously not. Resnais is an agnostic. If there is a God he believes in, it's worse than St Thomas Aquinas's. His attitude is this: perhaps

God exists, perhaps there is an explanation for everything, but there's nothing that allows us to be sure of it.

Godard: Like Dostoevsky's Stavrogin, who, if he believes, doesn't believe that he believes, and if he doesn't believe, doesn't believe that he doesn't believe. Besides, at the end of the film does Emmanuelle Riva leave, or does she stay? One can ask the same question about her as about Agnès in *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*, when you ask yourself whether she lives or dies.

Rivette: That doesn't matter. It's fine if half the audience thinks that Emmanuelle Riva stays with the Japanese man and the other half thinks that she goes back to France.

Domarchi: Marguerite Duras and Resnais say that she leaves, and leaves for good.

Godard: I'll believe them when they make another film that proves it to me.

Rivette: I don't think it really matters at all, for *Hiroshima* is a circular film. At the end of the last reel you can easily move back to the first, and so on. *Hiroshima* is a parenthesis in time. It is a film about reflection, on the past and on the present. Now, in reflection, the passage of time is effaced because it is a parenthesis within duration. And it is within this duration that *Hiroshima* is inserted. In this sense Resnais is close to a writer like Borges, who has always tried to write stories in such a way that on reaching the last line the reader has to turn back and re-read the story right from the first line to understand what it is about – and so it goes on, relentlessly. With Resnais it is the same notion of the infinitesimal achieved by material means, mirrors face to face, series of labyrinths. It is an idea of the infinite but contained within a very short interval, since ultimately the 'time' of *Hiroshima* can just as well last twenty-four hours as one second.

[. . .]

Translated by Liz Heron

Notes

1 'Tracking shots are a question of morality': Godard's dictum, intentionally provocative in its time for its refusal to distinguish form from content (see, for example, Richard Roud on this issue, 'The French Line', *Sight and Sound*, vol. 29, no. 4, Autumn 1960), has achieved a certain notoriety; but Luc Moullet, in an article on Samuel Fuller in *Cahiers* 93, March 1959, had already pronounced that 'morality is a question of tracking shots': see Luc Moullet, 'Sam Fuller: In Marlowe's Footsteps', Ch. 20 in this volume.

2 François Truffaut had been writing very enthusiastically about Sacha Guitry's work, much to the astonishment of some of his *Cahiers* colleagues, who tended to find it theatrical; Guitry was re-rediscovered, as it were, by *Cahiers* in the

1960s. See Truffaut, *Films in my Life*, pp. 214–16 (on Guitry's *Assassins et voleurs*, originally published as 'Du cinéma pur' in *Cahiers* 70, April 1957) and pp. 216–19 ('Sacha Guitry the Villain', also 1957, probably from *Arts*).

3 For clarity, Ingrid Bergman plays Eléna, the title role in Jean Renoir's 1956 film *Eléna et les hommes*.

4 *Journey into Autumn* (*Kvinnodröm*, also known as *Dreams*, Ingmar Bergman, 1955), *So Close to Life* (*Nära livet*, also known as *Brink of Life*, Bergman, 1957). Bergman was at this time one of *Cahiers*' most favoured *auteurs* (see my Introduction to the section on Italian cinema, in this volume): a Cinémathèque retrospective in 1958 was followed by the phased release of almost all Bergman's films and in 1958–9 hardly an issue of *Cahiers* went by without a review, interview or article on Bergman; see, for example, Godard, 'Bergmanorama', *Cahiers* 85, July 1958, reprinted in *Godard on Godard*, pp. 75–80.

5 Cf. the discussion about literature and film towards the end of the discussion 'Six Characters in Search of *auteurs*', Ch. 2 in this volume. Evidently, part of the value placed on *Hiroshima mon amour* comes from the literary context made very clear in that discussion.

6 The reference is to Rivette's 'Letter on Rossellini', Ch. 26 in this volume.

7 As indicated in the text, Resnais had edited Agnès Varda's 1955 feature, *La Pointe courte*; Resnais and Chris Marker had shared direction, script and commentary credits on *Les Statues meurent aussi* (1950–3), a short film about the decline of black African art brought about by contact with Western civilization (banned by the French censor until 1965); Marker had also collaborated on Resnais's and André Heinrich's short film *Le Mystère de l'Atelier 15* (1957), contributing the film's commentary.

8 Together, Resnais, Varda and Marker and their associates formed what came to be known sometimes as the 'Left Bank' group within the *nouvelle vague*, in contradistinction to the 'Right Bank' group associated primarily with *Cahiers* (Godard, Truffaut, Rivette, Rohmer, Chabrol, Doniol-Valcroze). The distinction is no longer as clear as it seemed in 1959–60, but the 'Left Bank' group (who did live on the Left Bank) marked itself off from the 'Right Bank' group in sharing a significantly more left-wing political stance (hence the aesthetics-politics discussion which follows) and a more active social concern, as well as having a closer relationship to modernist tendencies in the arts, and especially in literature (novelists Marguerite Duras and Alain Robbe-Grillet collaborating on Resnais's first two features), and hence a more pronounced concern (at this time, anyway) with formal innovation.

9 The reference is to the interview with Rossellini in *Cahiers* 94, April 1959, reprinted as Ch. 28(ii) in this volume.

Part Two

American Cinema

from: French Film: Texts + Contexts
Ed. Susan Hayward + Ginette Vincendeau. (1st edition)
London: Routledge, 1990.

13. How history begets meaning: Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959)

MARIE-CLAIRE ROPARS-WUILLEUMIER

For the spectator of 1959 who saw it when it first came out, seeing *Hiroshima mon amour* anew in the 1980s could jeopardize the memory of a film whose shock waves provoked more than one to refuse for some 20 years to see it again. Viewed from this later perspective, however, it is impossible not to perceive the film's modernity displayed through its very obsolescence: the theme of memory everywhere present in the action has become a commonplace convention; the anti-heroes whom we saw as free from psychological stereotypes have become the prototypes of the rising intellectual bourgeoisie; even the narrative, with its pauses and its ellipses, its vagaries and its open ending, declared the coming of a new narrative convention which would project the subjectivity of the characters through the representation of objects and places. *Hiroshima*'s legacy is substantial; yet the film, unmakable and never remade, remains without an heir, and in that respect it is unique in so far as it defies that very law of succession which it created. At the precise moment when the lines of meaning converge they disappear, or disperse laterally: a thematic is enounced, but no theme can be isolated, no phrase separated from the voice which utters it; characters appear clearly constructed but they divide into two interweaving networks; the remorseless diffraction of the editing breaches the film open to an audial and visual space which the action cannot saturate. It is here that we can locate the 'nocturnal clarity' of *Hiroshima*, which simultaneously tells an easily understandable story and interposes between that story and its perception a screen of multiple signs resistant to narrativity. This double movement now makes clear today the film's interest: *Hiroshima* precipitates a rupture of codes, through a forceful cinematographic *écriture* it dismantles the conventional order of cinema — hence the shock felt in 1959; but at the same time, the film makes readable what is at stake in its aesthetic of modernity by exposing, with its own particular force of rupture, the mechanisms of integration which that aesthetic puts into play.

It is this readability that escaped people in 1959: the rupture was understood but the reasons for it were not clear. If a controversy was started up it was on ambiguous lines because it began, on the one hand, with the marginalization of the film — it was turned down as the French selection for the Cannes Festival for reasons of political opportunism (not to upset the Americans) — and ended, on the other hand, with the commercial success of the film, thanks partly to a counter-attacking publicity campaign which stressed the erotic audacity of the subject matter (the raging passion between a Japanese man and a French woman). Unconditionally supported by the

intellectuals and the young directors of the time, who saw themselves in this different language and identified with a distanced way of belonging to the world, the film did not remain confined within this avant-garde framework: outside, it caused running battles in the press and public enquiries, both of which served to create further confusion by ultimately allowing the scandal to be recuperated. Whilst the work itself broke with the accepted repartition of categories and values in the establishment, the debates surrounding it marked out carefully partitioned areas of investigation: the aesthetic which tended either to promote the invention of an opera-film or, on the contrary, to denounce a failure which was, moreover, imputed to the literary pretentiousness or mental confusion of Duras alone; the political, which either stressed its absence (since when is Hiroshima apolitical?) or deplored its presence (but this is Hiroshima and a love-story!); the sociological, which insisted on the advent of the figure of the free woman and warned against ideological debate which could obscure the novelty of the tone and mores espoused by the film. This co-optation, whether positive or negative, operates in fact contrary to the impact of the film, whose modernity comes, first, from its refusal to separate the political and the aesthetic, the private from the public, the world-wide cataclysm and the individual trauma. The old territorial distinctions collapse, doubtless dissimulating the advance of new partitions. But acclaim, be it critical, intellectual or cinephilic, lags behind the discursive event this film represents. A beacon-film for a whole generation, *Hiroshima mon amour* crystallizes a certain number of theoretical and conceptual mutations, whose readability implies, beyond renouncing fascination, recourse to a textual approach already anticipated by the form of the film.

Breaking out of the cinematographic field, the 'Hiroshimanian' transgression can be read first in the context of the production modes it brought about. There has been a lot of critical comment on the collaboration between Resnais and Duras, without always taking into consideration the complexities of such an encounter which simultaneously opened up two divergent routes into the cinema that followed, and which, simultaneously, dominated the making of the film — thus problematizing the question of shared authorship. *Hiroshima mon amour* was Alain Resnais' first full-length feature film (to date he has made 11), but it also represented Marguerite Duras' first cinematographic intervention (since then she has put her name, as director, to 16 full-feature or short films). Henceforth their trajectories have never ceased to diverge: from *Hiroshima* to *Mélo* which leads Resnais to a theatre simulacrum, or from *Hiroshima* to *Dialogue de Rome* which leads Duras to the dialogic exacerbation of a faceless voice. On the one hand, a game of substitution and remakes, which reveals in what way shots and words become hackneyed; on the other, a verbal doubling-up, which inscribes the absence of the being within the presence of the word. However, there is little doubt that *Hiroshima* is the link that ties these two chains together, in so far as the film provokes a contamination between literature and cinema which

profoundly disturbs the generic specificities, thus putting an end to the innocence of cinema and, also, to the complacency of literature.

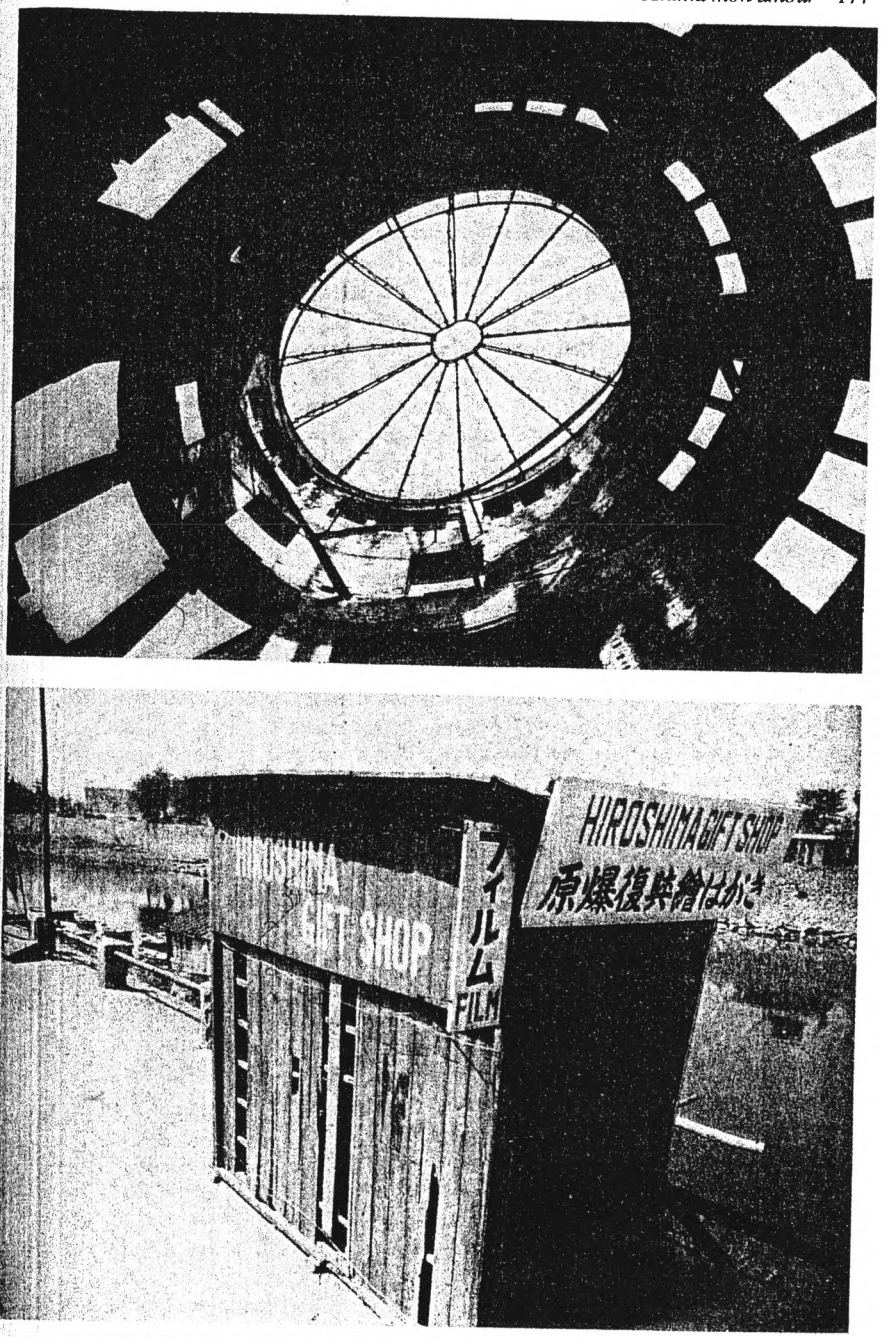
Duras' heritage is the novel, Resnais' that of the documentary short film. But when Resnais, in response to a Japanese request for a film on the atomic devastation, decided not to confine himself to the documentary-style testimony of *Nuit et brouillard*, it was neither a film script nor a proper novel that he commissioned from the novelist but rather a fictional apparatus which would structure the film and which he would create with her. Certainly, the text published by Duras in 1960 carries the title 'script and dialogues'. However it is unusual in that it contains, apart from a description of the film made, elements of another film, one that would have been different but did not get made. This 'subterranean continuity', needed by Resnais to establish the characters, seems obliterated by the actual film, which allows no direct mention to surface. By taking charge of the *romanesque* left-overs, this 'subterranean continuity' frees the filmic continuity from any explanatory impediment, and thus makes possible the functioning of an internal discontinuity; but at the same time this 'subterranean continuity' increases the fragmentation of the Durassian *opus* whose extreme literariness goes hand in hand with an unrealizable homogeneity: one part becomes the libretto of an organized film, whilst the other harnesses the temptation of realism and breaks it into pieces.[1]

Such is the peculiarity of this commission that the filmmaker makes the author write by forcing her to re-write, and only generates the writing to turn it to the sole advantage of the film. According to Resnais, the purpose was to create at the cinema the equivalent of the reading process. This fertile paradox arises from the fact that when this reading occurs it will no longer rely on an already written text. To the appeal of the literary, which primed the cinema at that time, Bresson's response was to transcribe and Godard to quote; Resnais, for his part, would always refuse adaptation, only *Mélo* feigns an exception to this rule; and the reading that *Hiroshima mon amour* brings into play, because it is a reading and a writing, inscribes into the film a reminder of the missing book, the existence of which the film both prevents and presupposes. This is already to define the alteration entailed by a filmic conception of writing which includes linguistic signs but simultaneously absorbs them into a style of editing with multiple entry-points, vocal and figurative. But it is also to invite us to shift the relationship between reading and the work read: to read, therefore, would mean to write, but only by turning writing (via the short-circuit of the cinema) into the point of disjunction of the bookish mode. It is Duras who pursued this paradoxical route, which leads to writing in order to film and to filming in order to destroy both text and film, whose respective identities in turn are shattered through an inability to define themselves exclusively. But Resnais, in multiplying his literary collaborations, never ceased to reiterate the act of exaction inaugurated with *Hiroshima*. On both accounts, *Hiroshima mon amour* represents the entry into the cinematographic world of the notion of film-text: the film becomes text, not because it includes

a text (even were it blown up to the lyrical dimensions of a cataclysm), but rather because it incorporates a textual apparatus which deprives the written text of its autonomy, its specificity even, and at the same time lays the film open to the invasion of an off-screen space, by definition hidden.

Borne on the necessities of fiction (which sealed the Duras-Resnais pact) and discernible only today, a second sectorial disruption arose. The taste for stories, either cheap novelettes or melodrama, is common to both authors, but in neither instance do they come back to the historical evidence. What Resnais appears to retain from *Moderato cantabile* (published in 1958) is the manner in which Duras starts a story by throwing into it the fragmented memory of another story: he then asked the author for a fictional construction based on two tempos, the structure of which is not dissimilar, on the scale of a full-feature film, to the temporal distanciation experienced in *Nuit et brouillard*. Duras grafted on to the Hiroshima love story, the plot of which is supposed to respond to the Japanese commission, the memory of a German love affair, which carries, in the film, the name and the place Nevers, thus satisfying the Franco-Japanese nature of the production. But the invention of Nevers draws from sources other than the fiction of Hiroshima, as the recent publication of *La douleur* testifies — this is a diary which seems to have been written in April 1945, although Duras is quite adamant that she does not remember when she wrote it.[2] Through the multiplication of the referential signs which link the text to the end of the war, by focusing it on the reception given to the first deportees to return from the concentration camps, the reader discovers, in the form of disconnected traces, the generic image of the German adventure (a young German soldier agonizing on the quai des Arts), the 'cry' incessantly repeated, coming from she ('I', 'Marguerite L.', 'M. Leroy') who hopes for the return of her deported husband, the obsessive fantasy of a corpse 'in the black ditch', on which is based the love for the absent one. And, when the return of the dying deportee occurs, the reader notices that the diary has changed into a story in order to relate, after the event, the lengthy task of rehabilitation, followed by the narrator's pronouncement of her decision to leave the one she has brought back to life: a pronouncement which coincides, approximately, with the press reports of the 'A' bomb explosion in Hiroshima.

I will return later to the structural implications of such a confluence whereby the tone, sometimes the rhythm, and above all the underlying structure of *La douleur* seem to have slipped into the story of Nevers. But the echo effect, which associates fragmentarily these two texts, leads one inevitably and immediately to stress to what extent fiction, in Duras' work, contaminates the real. Certainly, the German story — pure outgrowth of an image glimpsed at and suppressed — is in no way autobiographical; but the tonal resemblance between *Hiroshima* and *La douleur* invalidates, for the latter text too, any illusion that it might be autobiographical. If the diary in *La douleur* undoubtedly transcribes elements of Duras' life, the style of this diary leads one to suppose that it is in fact a 'false' diary, whose writing-up, spread apparently over two epochs, could have coincided with that of *Hiroshima*.



Hiroshima mon amour — above: *La mémoire* (memory); below: ... *des signes* (of the signs)

A single gesture with Duras — the act of *écriture* — designates and destroys the real. *La Vie est un roman* (life is a novel), says Resnais, thereby generating a film which plays on convention in its purest state. Literature is the real, Duras might say, whose recent intervention in a legal matter, where she decided all on her own between what was true and false, thus substituting the logic of fiction for that of the event, is well known.[3] This awareness of pretence causes, between Duras and Resnais, a bringing into question of the function of the documentary: for contradictory reasons, a shared suspicion prevails over the issue of representation, whether fictitious or discursive, whose narrative source has been exposed. However, even narration itself risks teetering when it is anchored in the double play of a memory given as a condition of entry into the event, and where, paradoxically, it erases that which it inscribes. As an abstract and not a psychological notion, the 'Hiroshimanian' memory does not belong to the subjective reality of the recollection, but to the complexity of the rapport which the movement of resurfacing mobilizes when it is conceived of as a movement of divergence/a divergent movement. Here, once again, the Resnais-Duras encounter leads to divergence depending on whether the stress is placed on the conceptual machine which attaches memory to the whole space of time — this is the memory-world or brain which Deleuze imputes to Resnais — or, on the contrary, whether one insists on the theoretical mechanism of a memory-oblivion which seals the secret relationship between Duras and Blanchot, by opening the text to an infinite repetition of signs. Nonetheless, via these two different meanings, which lead either to *Mon oncle d'Amérique* or to *Aurélia Steiner*, a similar problematics of the trace articulates, in *Hiroshima mon amour*, the perspective of memory and the editing work: remembrances, sounds and images become traces, not so much because they refer back to an exterior reality which they would confirm, but because they indicate, at every point of actual perception, the potential absence of that point always drawn, by the attraction of the relationship to the other, out of the perceptible sphere of presence.

Caught in this paradoxical logic, it is the very remembrance of the bomb at Hiroshima or of the death at Nevers that will activate the decoupling editing style whereby the syntax of *Hiroshima* pushes back the memory that the sign wishes to approach. But between the evocation of Hiroshima and that of Nevers a rupture occurs, reflected in the structural heterogeneity of a film divided into the prologue and the rest of the film: the trace, the substitute for representation, can lead to a narrative-line or stay with the explosive violence of an *écriture* with no narrative outcome. Crossing the cinema-literature frontier, conflating the reality-fiction distinction, *Hiroshima mon amour* points, more obliquely, to the new division which has opened up in the field of representation between the referring of the real to the writerly urge and the reduction of the real to a referentializable narrative. The fact that the event at Hiroshima is at the centre of this division gives the film its specifically historical dimension, whereby history recognizes itself as tributary to a

discourse whose narrative growth is no longer self-evident.

Amongst the various disjunctions that this film activates, the most extraordinary one surely has to do with the unclassifiable nature of the opening sequence or prologue whose discontinuous montage, horizontal and vertical, cancels out the narrativity that the credit titles seemed to announce.[4] The irregular alternation between embracing bodies and burning bodies, the recitative of two unlocatable voices off-screen, the uninterrupted tension of image and voice — such is this opening sequence. This disruption appears even more provoking since this inaugural passage, which lasts 15 minutes[5], represents the sole reconstruction that the film provides of the atomic explosion. The violence of the relationship established between extreme pain and extreme pleasure — the horror of destruction and the erotic disaster — has attracted all the attention; but the disorder introduced into our scale of values runs the risk of obscuring the aesthetic daring of a sequence constructed on a principle of general dislocation, according to which the profusion of verbal, visual and musical themes defies reduction to a stabilized structure. There is no doubt that this opening sequence, in refusing to document the effects of the bomb, infused the editing itself with the force of radiation linked to atomic disintegration.[6] If Resnais exorcizes the documentary illusion and refers it back to the 'film on Peace' which he refuses to make, he retains from his experience in short films an ability to transpose on to filmic *écriture* the apparatus that generates the object to be conjured up.

To film Hiroshima, then, means to show in what way the event exceeds the possibility of fixing it within filmic representations. The monstrous debris in the museum and the mutilated survivors in the hospitals, the photos, newsreels, reconstructions — all the figurative signs like all the verbal details — point to the impotence of sight and knowledge to organize the readability of an event which can only be acknowledged through the mimicry of a fragmented editing style constructed on the model of the atomic explosion. Resnais' experience in short films allows him to fissure the full-length feature film and to achieve, around the unrepresentable, the exchange of the event for an inscription of that event. But a second operation, less immediately interpretable, negotiates another exchange that is active underground as early as the prologue: the one which will allow the transference, later on in the film, of the 'unrepresentable' of Hiroshima on to the 'narratable' of Nevers. Contributing to the tearing of the filmic fabric, the editing which links the lovers' bodies with those of the victims serves simultaneously to discharge on the erotic encounter the disjunctive energy emitted by the explosion; once narrativized — and that constitutes the rest of the film, during which time is measured and mental pertubations become embedded subjectively — the couple's liaison will re-route the rupture contained in the prologue, and make it enounciable by displacing it on to another narrative delivered in the stead of and in the locus of the narrative which was impossible. How to change an event into writing *and* writing into history? this is the purpose of a transference from desiring pulsion to desired object, the actualization of which is prepared

by the prologue of *Hiroshima* — meantime indicating, by the disproportion of the parts, the incommensurable nature of the two operations.

A deformed hand, a destroyed eye, hair torn out, a distraught woman breaking out of a cavernous dwelling, a twisted bicycle, legs of passers-by, river, anger, stone — long is the list of materials which the narrative of Nevers drags out of Hiroshima's museum and reconstructs into appeased, if not acceptable, forms. The germ of the story takes the lovers' bed as the source of a narration which will intertwine, in a weak echo of the prologue, the close views of the bodies and the distant ones of the Loire; and the story itself only comes to the film in dislocated pieces, alternating with the duration of an encounter and doubling up its trajectory. But as distinct from the prologue — hence the purpose of the transference — the fragmentation does not remain fragmentary: organized and controlled, the discontinuity serves henceforth to manipulate, with the story of the German past, the work of narrative production which authorizes the reconstruction of facts.

What does telling a story mean? If we believe the story of Nevers, it means to transform one isolated, brutal, incomprehensible image — the first mental visualization of the dying German — into a coherent and continuous whole whose verbalization guarantees, moreover, its interpretation. All that is needed is less a chronological line — the story remains disorganized, progressing in either concentric or successive waves — than a beginning and an end, a transmitter and a receiver. This story, initiated by an unclear image of death, will not end until it has tied the chain of cause and consequence around this death. In answer to a death shot which remains undeciphered (shot 273) comes — through the relentless play of questions and answers — a later reprise of an almost identical shot with this difference that it is now linked, by two internal panoramic shots, to the logical diachronic sequence of the 'before' and 'after' (shot 313): the shot begins with a quick glance of the young woman as she appears at the top of the bridge, and then turns to a high-angle shot of the dying body; the shot ends with another simulation of the glance, looking up to a balcony already seen in an earlier flashback (shot 237) whose signification is now understood because it is the place from which the fatal bullet was fired. Thus, one single shot serves to articulate the fact (the death) and its origin (the murder); at the same time, and within the same visual continuity, the shot reveals the action of discovering the fact whereby the subject accedes to knowledge; the shot even inverts the ordering of elements since the subjective comprehension precedes the reprise of the event, thus permitting a return to the cause which has now become enounciable.

Telling a story, then, means making an event readable by inserting it into a logical continuity. The execution of this operation cannot happen without a lengthy investigation — signified in this instance by dual elaboration of the couple's dialogue: it is the receiver — the Japanese man — who through his repeated questions extracts from the holder of the secret — the French woman — an evocation of the past whose exposure must be organized. Obviously, the scene simulates the psychotherapeutic process of voluntary memory — anamnesis — whereby the analyser transforms a fantasy into a story and transfers the obsessional charge on to the analyst who is, in turn, capable of involving himself in the story obtained: this is what the Japanese man will do in identifying with the German. But the psychoanalytical simulacrum, so frequent in Duras' work which always tries to outsmart Lacan, is less important here than the act of transference which it clearly designates: through the elaboration of Nevers, it is the appropriation of Hiroshima which *Hiroshima mon amour* relates; the spectator is invited to transfer on to this simple story that has become transparent, the opaque memory of an event whose importance cannot be formulated — hence the verbal conflation (upon the last shot of the Nevers story) between the finally understood death of the German and the discovery of Hiroshima in the Parisian newspapers (shot 323). With all the links established, and the disparate series of events articulated one to another, a dating becomes possible ('14 years have passed', shot 324); and the uncontrollable explosion of Hiroshima, which seemed relegated since the end of the film's prologue, can at last open on to a familiar chronology, a formulated reference — in short a historicity, where the mediation of Nevers has shown the essential role that narrativization plays.

To historicize Hiroshima, by giving it a place in time and space (in our western time and space), such appears to have been the oblique function of the long detour undertaken in the Nevers story. The modernity of the film transpires from its actualization of this transference by dismantling, through cinematic means, the mechanism of the process: making history is making a story, by diverting indescribable sights towards a discursive continuity they become seizable for the subject and can, therefore, be channeled: 'I have told our story. You see, it was, after all, tellable.' That betrayal has occurred here, such is the inference to be drawn from the structure of *La douleur* which once again we see in operation here: the donation of story-telling goes hand in hand with the abandonment of that which was narrated; and the narration, in separating life from death, completes the mourning work by severing the link between Eros and Thanatos.[7] Once the story has been told, all there remains for Nevers is the cantata of oblivion, where the subject — created by the act of her narration and exclusive possessor of the off-screen voice — expels the Nevers memory and exchanges it for views of modern Hiroshima. That is the ultimate goal of the transference. Such as it is generated by the prologue, the explosion at Hiroshima eludes both the subject and the object, both the word and direct figuration, only a trace remains. Projected on to the streets of Nevers, and linked to a narration which takes its place, the scar of Hiroshima enters in turn into the domain of oblivion whose exclusive memorableness the film guarantees. The process of obliteration is double-edged, and the itinerary which inscribes Hiroshima into a story remains reversible: although circumscribed, the fragmentation of the editing can always let filter through, under the known and named present, the resurgence of the unnamable that the writing has focused on the name Hiroshima, and where the film is dispersed. This, then, is the final paradox, whereby the writing completes its task of an

ordering into signs or, in other words, its double task of signification and obliteration.

In asserting, at the end of the film, the substitution of names for persons and things, *Hiroshima mon amour* designates the progress of a modernity which refers History's transparence back to the opacity of signs which history both lays down and deciphers. There lies the ambiguity of the trace — indisputable but unclaimable: in order to read it, it must be written, and in order to write it, it must be modified. The strength of the film is in its ability to show how the endlessly open system, from one trace to another — in other words writing — can be transformed into a closed narrative, without the sign, now readable, ever completely obliterating the process of writing and its burden of unreadability. The name Nevers is transparent in French, that of Hiroshima simultaneously conveys the weight of a historicizable referent and the potential for linguistic and figurative dislocation which its hieroglyphic form symbolizes.[8] Impelled by this name, the editing of *Hiroshima mon amour* manages to make the 'Hiroshimanian' trace into a floating fragment, capable of furbishing material to historical signification and, too, to keep open, by the very language of the film, the gap between history and a trace which remains unassignable. The story-line may well change our vision, however. The film obliges us to acknowledge the mechanism of an exchange in which we participate. In making the spectators take on, within the filmic perception, the burden of the transference and the modulation of remembrance-oblivion,[9] *Hiroshima mon amour* demands that we realize, in every meaning of the word, the ambiguity of a historicization which the textual mediation renders necessarily indirect and thus uncertain. Unless it is inscribed in bodies, History leads to the museum; the trace is at once an aid to readability and a sign of the unfamiliar; and if the reading still remains to be done, the writing-reading reminds us, by its surplus and its overflowing, of the loss of substance that the acquisition of meaning costs.

It is no longer possible today to cheat with the implications of a mutation that was formerly glossed over by false debate. If an emerging generation recognized itself in *Hiroshima*, it is because the film proposed, and at the same time legitimated, on the aesthetic and political fronts, a 'dubious' representation not of morality — as Riva declares, who doubts of the morality of others — but most certainly of historicity. Despite the mnemonic kinship, *Hiroshima mon amour* does not remake *Nuit et brouillard*: the latter underscored the distance in time between the film's gaze and the reality of Auschwitz, but confirmed, in a few shots, the unmasking of an inescapable horror; the horror of Hiroshima is not eclipsed, but it becomes the object of a secret reflection upon the terms of both enunciation and expulsion of the historical event. Filmed during the Algerian war, *Hiroshima* cannot and will not refer to it: only *Muriel* speaks of it, but not until the Evian agreements have been signed and even then with an extreme form of distanciation which renders inaccessible, except in the shape of a verbal narration embedded into a fiction, the representation of acts of war. Coming between *Nuit et brouillard*

and *Muriel*, *Hiroshima* marks the moment when, in the aesthetic world, that consciousness of an irreducible gap between facts and their formulation emerged. If, with the Resnais-Duras encounter, writing comes to the cinema, it is through the discovery that language is a screen: caught in the trap of having to testify, sight exhausts itself in the process of self-affirmation; to state the act of seeing is already to see no longer, and to condemn oneself to seeing again: the strategy of the film consists in playing this gap-screen dynamic by problematizing it within the apparatus of a divided fiction which both distances the event and gets closer to it in a most oblique but nonetheless critical manner. In order to integrate Hiroshima into our history, we must go through the betrayal of Nevers, the love affair of Nevers. Seeing *Hiroshima mon amour* again means taking on, simultaneously, the genesis and the rejection of all historical revisionism.

Translated from the French by Susan Hayward.

NOTES

1. The fragmented nature of these explanatory passages is reinforced by a splintered style which seems contaminated by the editing of the film: an accumulation of brief notes, corrections, additions and shifts, as if the enunciator was grabbing at straws in the wind. Dismantled and repetitive, the explanation becomes hackneyed. The erosive effect is all the more active since a discursive subject ('I') often gets mixed up with the object of the commentary ('she', 'Riva'), thus rendering problematic the status of the narration. The future of another text slips into this memory of a film that is other.

2. Marguerite Duras (1985) *La Douleur*, Paris, POL. The book contains, beyond the diary entitled *La douleur*, four unpublished 'stories', sometimes described as 'true', at others as 'invented'. The subject matter concerns the war period, but the writing, sometimes rewritten, escapes dating. There is also a re-edition of *Aurélia-Paris*.

3. The case referred to is the Gregory affair. A small child was murdered and his mother was duly charged with his murder. Duras aserted her opinion that the mother was innocent (eds).

4. Organized along the lines of the most classical model possible of the French cinema of the 1930s. The only clash is the image which acts as a background for the letters: a trace in the shape of an irregular scar, which the film will not pick up again, except once, in the prologue.

5. And with 133 shots. According to the shooting script published in *Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima* (1962) the whole film, which lasts one and a half hours, is made up of 423 shots; this then represents a particularly fast montage for such a long opening sequence. In the rest of my analysis, I shall adopt the numbering used in this edition — the transcription is reasonably trustworthy.

6. On this point, see Ropars-Wuilleumier (1983).

7. As for Duras, she never ceases to return to this love of the dead which she will eventually name *La Maladie de la mort*. Resnais, for his part, will favour *L'Amour à mort*, surviving beyond death. Once again, this encounter causes two inverted paths to cross. The complexity of *Hiroshima* comes also from the multiplicity of divergences which feed the film.

8. The insistence on the part of the dialogue to stress the insignificance of Nevers is a game of trompe-l'oeil: 'négation' (ne) and 'naissance' ('née'), 'novation' ('neuve') and 'errance' ('erre'), the name Nevers accumulates semantic indicators the most important of which is undoubtedly the designation of 'verre' (glass), which comes into play in a number of filmic forms all of which rely on the transparence of the material. The name Hiroshima,

also stressed by the dialogue, is the subject represented in hieroglyphics and duplicated in English words (see shot 91).

9. As privileged operators of this transaction, we retain the musical thematization: the musical themes are established as soon as the opening sequence, but their semantic identification is particularly random, because they will not become attached, during the rest of the film, to any particular figuration. When a theme returns, the spectators acknowledge having heard it, but do not recognize the musical image which they thought they had heard: the trace brings with it alteration, and memory gains access to oblivion. The so-called musical theme of oblivion is precisely the one of the credit titles and the closing shot.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Avant-Scène Cinéma (1966) 61-62, special issue on Resnais.
Armes, Roy (1968) *The Cinema of Alain Resnais*, London, Zwemmer.
Benayoun, Robert (1980) *Alain Resnais, arpenteur de l'imaginaire*, Paris, Stock.
Bounoure, Gaston (1962) *Alain Resnais*, re-edited in 1968 and 1974. French bibliography up-dated in 1968.
Cahiers du cinéma (1959) 97.
Cinéma 59 (1959) 35 and 38.
Colpi, Henri (1960) 'Musique Hiroshima', *Cahiers du cinéma*, 103.
Esprit (1960) special number on French Cinema, Paris, Seuil. See also their October 1959 issue which presents a debate on the film.
Etudes cinématographiques (1960) 3-4.
Image et Son (1959) 128, Fiche UFOLEIS.
Monaco, James (1978) *Alain Resnais, the Role of Imagination*, London, Secker & Warburg, New York, Oxford University Press.
Pingaud, Bernard (1959) in *Positif*, 31, Paris, Le Terrain vague.
Pingaud, Bernard (1960) in *Positif*, 35, Paris, Le Terrain vague.
Pingaud, Bernard (ed.) (1967) *Alain Resnais ou la création au cinéma*, in *L'Arc*, 31. Contains an excellent interview with Resnais.
Premier Plan (1959) 4, Lyon, Serdoc.
Premier Plan (1961) 18, Lyon, Serdoc. Contains French and overseas bibliography.
Ropars-Wuilleumier, Marie-Claire (1983) 'Le Film lecteur du texte', *Hors Cadre*, 1, Paris, P.U.V.
Ward, John (1968) *Alain Resnais or the Theme of Time*, London, Cinema One.

SCRIPTS

Duras, Marguerite (1960) *Hiroshima mon amour*, Paris, Gallimard.
Duras, Marguerite (1961) *Hiroshima mon amour*, New York, Grove Press.
Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima (1962) Séminaire du Film et du Cinéma, Institut de Sociologie de l'Université libre de Bruxelles. Photo-script of film.

APPENDIX

Alain Resnais (1922—): filmography

1948 *Van Gogh* (short)
1950 *Gauguin* (short)
1950 *Guernica* (short)
1955 *Nuit et brouillard* (short)
1956 *Toute la mémoire du monde* (short)
1957 *Le Mystère de l'atelier* (short)
1958 *Le Chant du styrène* (short)

1959 *Hiroshima mon amour*
1961 *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*
1963 *Muriel*
1966 *La Guerre est finie*
1967 *Loin du Vietnam* (sketch in this collective work)
1968 *Je t'aime, je t'aime*
1974 *Stavisky*
1976 *Providence*
1980 *Mon oncle d'Amérique*
1983 *La Vie est un roman*
1984 *L'Amour à mort*
1986 *Mélo*

Other films cited in the text

Dialogue de Rome, Marguerite Duras (1982)

from French Film: Texts and Contexts (2nd edition),
Ed. Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau
New York & London: Routledge, 2000

22

DESIGNS ON THE *BANLIEUE*

Mathieu Kassovitz's *La Haine* (1995)

Ginette Vincendeau

When Mathieu Kassovitz's second feature, *La Haine*, came out in 1995, a new *auteur* was born, and the world 'discovered' the Parisian suburbs. *La Haine* is a stylish black-and-white chronicle of a day in the life of three male youths from a rough housing estate outside Paris. Hubert (Hubert Koundé) is black, Vinz (Vincent Cassel) is white and Jewish and Saïd (Saïd Taghmaoui) is a *beur*, slang for someone of second-generation North African descent. The film begins with television coverage of riots that took place on the estate the night before and during which a young *beur*, Abdel, was critically wounded. From then on, we follow the three friends on a supposedly 'typical' diet of boredom and violence which ends on a shocking new explosion of violence.

La Haine was one of the film events of 1995. The work of an unknown twenty-eight-year-old director and with no star, it was immensely successful critically and commercially. Kassovitz was awarded the coveted prize for best direction at Cannes. On 31 May, the day of its release, *La Haine* clocked up an exceptional twenty-one thousand spectators in Paris alone. The film generated much newsworthy controversy, from police guards walking out of a Cannes screening and riots in a Marseilles cinema, to Kassovitz going into hiding to escape media attention. *La Haine* took fifth place at the 1995 French box-office – beaten by *Gazon maudit* and *Die Hard 3*, but ahead of *The Usual Suspects* and of French super-productions such as *Le Hussard sur le toit*. It did very well outside France too, including in the USA, where Jodie Foster publicly endorsed it.[1] The script was published as an illustrated book; two CDs were released: one of the soundtrack and one of rap music 'inspired by the film'; exhibitions were mounted. Three years on, Virgin Megastore sells the English subtitled video with a gift *La Haine* T-shirt and the cable film channel FilmFour (launched 1 November 1998) selected it as one of its few non-English-speaking films, putting the seal of approval on *La Haine* as belonging to the new 'genre' of youth-oriented and violent international neo-*noir* movies.

The high-profile release of *La Haine* in 1995 was matched by wide-ranging critical attention. The film was highly praised for its portrayal of alienated underclass youths, and their habitat, the Parisian working-class *banlieue* (suburbs). There had been representations of working-class suburbs in French cinema before: in the films of Jean-Luc Godard and Maurice Pialat and more recently in many others, including Jean-Claude Brisseau, Jean-François Richet, Medhi Charef, Thomas Gilou and Malik Chibane, to the point that critics have debated whether there is a '*banlieue* film' genre (Jousse 1995, Reader 1995, Vigo 1995, Reynaud 1996). Furthermore, *La Haine* fits in with the 1990s 'young French cinema' (Xavier Beauvois, Agnès Merlet, Laetitia Masson, Karim Dridi and others) which increasingly addresses social issues (Marie 1998). Yet it is Kassovitz's film which came to represent, internationally, the cutting edge of French cinema. So why did *La Haine* become an international hit, rather than Brisseau's *De bruit et de fureur* (1988), Charef's *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède* (1985) or Chibane's *Hexagone* (1994), three films which occupy similar territories?

At the core of *La Haine* is a dual, and sometimes contradictory, appeal to authenticity and to youth culture. Black-and-white film stock, location shooting, slang dialogue (including the title from youth slang 'avoir la haine') signal a desire to be true to an observable situation. *La Haine* echoed real-life occurrences such as the 1990–1 riots in Lyons and Paris suburbs, and foreshadowed others in late 1995 and in 1997, including in Chanteloup-les-Vignes where it was shot. The film was released shortly after the right-wing populist Jacques Chirac was elected President of the Republic in May 1995, following a campaign dominated by themes of '*fracture sociale*' (social cleavage) and 'exclusion', of which the suburban housing estates (*cités*) are the emblem. At the same time, *La Haine* is one of the most stylized French films of recent years, which displays cinematic allegiances – Martin Scorsese, Spike Lee and John Woo principally – distant from the classic social realism of Pialat, Ken Loach and Mike Leigh. As Kassovitz put it: 'The aim was to make the *cité* beautiful, using smooth camerawork. I had the money [a budget of 15 million francs]. There are moments when it's all too much, almost complacent, like a music video' (*Positif* 1995, 11). A few dissenting voices (Alexander 1995, Rémy 1995, Douhaire 1998) to the general praise indeed queried *La Haine*'s 'authenticity' on the grounds that its seductive *mise-en-scène* was evidence of lack of political rigour. My aim in this chapter is to explore further the ways in which *mise-en-scène* in *La Haine* both supports and contradicts its social project.

Mapping a social space

Paris, the modern city *par excellence*, has dominated French cinema. Elegant or picturesque apartment blocks, intimate courtyards and bustling cafés constitute its cinematic grammar. Initially, the areas outside the historic centre

were seen as idyllic populist sites offering relief from the noisy city – for instance in Marcel Carné's *Nogent, Eldorado du dimanche* (1929), Julien Duvivier's *La Belle équipe* (1936) and Denys de la Patellière's *Rue des Prairies* (1959).

Everything changed in the 1960s, when the economic boom and rapid expansion of Paris and other major cities under de Gaulle's administration demanded a massive building programme to house the displaced French workers of the *exode rural* and the freshly arrived immigrants. In some cases, the new buildings replaced appalling *bidonvilles*. The architecture of the 1960s–70s went into concrete gigantism, betrayed by the names of the most notorious estates: *Les 4000* in La Courneuve, *Les 3000* in Aulnay-sous-Bois. In high tower blocks or long 'walls', the grids of identical flats were nicknamed 'rabbit hutches'. Thin walls let noises through, water ran through the cellars, lifts broke down; there were few shops and cafés, and a lack of cultural venues. As Renaud sang in the 1970s, 'France is a shitty suburb'.[2] Subsequent, more imaginative, housing programmes designed smaller blocks. But the need for cheap terrain pushed these further out of the metropolis. This is the case for Chanteloup-les-Vignes, a forlorn north-western suburb, a forty-minute train ride from Saint-Lazare station. Coming close to what Marc Augé (1995) calls 'non-place', the estate stands on the edge of an immense empty landscape of fields and distant industrial buildings, separated by a railway station which was deliberately fited on the day of its inauguration. In Chanteloup-les-Vignes as elsewhere, better architecture was not an answer to the real problems of high unemployment and increased immigration from the early 1980s. Pockets of misery developed, ridden with drugs, alcohol and violence. Numerous urban improvement policies were introduced, culminating in the creation of a (short-lived) Minister for the City in 1991, provoking mostly anger and derision (Maspero 1990; Garnier 1996). The social segregation put in place in the 1960s was backfiring, aggravated by the worsening racial issue. The working-class *banlieue*, where the majority of the immigrant population lives, is choice breeding ground for the fascist National Front.

Since the 1960s, French fiction films have responded to the *banlieue* in two main fashions, which I will call 'aesthetic' and 'sociological' (though some of the films, e.g. Rohmer's and Brisseau's, share both tendencies). The aesthetic tendency includes films such as Godard's *Une femme mariée* (1964), *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (1967), and *Numéro deux* (1975), Rohmer's *Les Nuits de la pleine lune* (1984), and *L'Ami de mon amie* (1987), Alain Corneau's *Série noire* (1979), Claire Simon's *Scènes de ménage* (1991), and Brisseau's *De bruit et de fureur* (1988). In these predominantly *auteur* films, the *banlieue* tends to serve as background to other concerns, such as consumerist society, existential displacement and sexual politics. The desire to avoid the (in France, derogatory) critical label of 'sociological' is manifest in the foregrounding of an aesthetic agenda: the use of sound in *Deux ou trois choses*, the split screen in

Numéro deux, the hallucinatory apparitions in *De bruit et de fureur*. On the 'sociological' side are films where the *banlieue* is a central topic and a decor and where the approach is naturalistic: Pialat's *Loulou* (1979), Coline Serreau's *Romuald et Juliette* (1989) and *La Crise* (1992), Serge Le Péron's *Laisse béton* (1984), as well as comedies such as Gérard Lauzier's *Le Plus beau métier du monde* (1996) and Merzak Allouache's *Salut, cousin!* (1996). Since the mid-1980s, the so-called 'films de *banlieue*' have concentrated on working-class estates. These include *beur* or *beur*-oriented films such as *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède* (1985), *Hexagone* (1994), Thomas Gilou's *Raï* (1995), Chibane's *Douce France* (1995) and others such as Richet's *Etat des lieux* (1995) and *Ma 6-T va crack-er* (1997). In this spectrum, *La Haine* occupies a bridging position. From the 'sociological' films it takes a genuine interest in the working-class suburb as setting and topic, and from the 'aesthetic' films a stylistic distanciation from it.

As setting, Kassovitz elected the late 1970s 'average' estate of La Noë in Chanteloup-les-Vignes because he did not want 'a hellish estate where you can't film because you are being shot at. . . . I did not want derelict buildings either' (*Télérama* 1995a, 44). Chanteloup-les-Vignes, however, is hardly 'average'. Initially planned to house the workers of a nearby Simca car factory, the estate is now testimony to the devastation of unemployment. Since the early 1980s, it has become 'a test-town, an observatory of urban difficulties' (Robache and Saragoussi 1998, 81). Although the design of *La Haine*'s estate deliberately avoids high-rise buildings and allows Kassovitz to eschew the huge forbidding 1960s blocks of *Deux ou trois choses, Le Thé* or *De bruit et de fureur*, the place appears as desolate and violent. Its dominant visual motif is that of small curved blocks with distinctive roof designs and of children's playgrounds, though children play with burnt cars rather than on the sand pits. The three heroes walk down its streets and car parks, sit in the squares, mostly alone. Hubert's burned-down gym is empty; the petrol station is vandalized and barren; the train and the Paris Saint-Lazare station are empty. The dominant image is of a 'dead space' which visualizes the boys' boredom while it detaches them from their surroundings. Compared to *Le Thé, Hexagone* and *Raï*, but also to American films depicting similar milieux, like Lee's *Do the Right Thing* (1989) and *Clockers* (1995), the *banlieue* of *La Haine* lacks social depth. Unlike many other *banlieue* films with establishing shots depicting the *borders* between their *cité* and the rest of the world, *La Haine* never shows us how the *cité* stands in relation to its environment, and thus decontextualizes it.

Traditional spaces of social interaction, such as flats and staircases, are scant. We go inside Vinz's and Hubert's flats (not Saïd's), but the important scenes again isolate them; the boys retreat from family life and hole up in their bedrooms. The only other interior we see in the *cité* is that of Darty[3] the fence, basically a warehouse. Unlike in *Le Thé, Hexagone* or *Douce France*, the three heroes never meet in cafés or discos. When they go to a café in Paris, we

see only the downstairs toilet. Attempts at recreating social space take place on the margins, on the roof and in the cellars. The roof functions as the most convivial space, symbolically 'elevating' the youngsters who, though they are ultimately removed from it, have the upper hand over the authorities. By contrast, the scene in the cellars is an undignified chase. This is a common image of exclusion, found in many *banlieue* films, like the exclusion from nightclubs, sufficiently common to have become a cliché. In *Douce France* the *beur* hero ironizes that he curled his hair to look more *beur* so he would be thrown out of nightclubs 'in order to integrate into exclusion'. Apart from a brief scene at the local Vietnamese shop, the only institutionalized 'social' arena in *La Haine*'s estate is the police station. Even the job centre, which recurs in *beur* films (albeit to show prejudice and lack of opportunity), is absent. The only representation of 'employment' is dealing in drugs and stolen goods, like a distorted mirror of legitimate society. A 1993 study showed how, in estates such as that of *La Haine*, drug dealing 'benefited from increased benevolence on the part of families, who see its financial windfalls as a way of paying the bills' (Garnier 1996, 33–4), as Hubert's mother does (and as sung by rap group Expression Direkt in the CD inspired by *La Haine*).[4] Drugs are one of the issues which illustrate Kassovitz's uneasy relationship with the social reality he depicts. In the British press-book for *La Haine* he asserts there were no drugs at La Noë, contradicting both their recurrent presence in the film and off-screen evidence about the estate (this may have been his way of pacifying the inhabitants of La Noë, some of whom were hostile to the shooting of *La Haine* and to the film itself).[5]

Kassovitz's bleak picture thus relates to observable social factors. It is also the result of his concentration on a male world. In a classic gendered division of space, we glimpse mothers, aunts and grandmothers at home, cooking and sewing, and sisters doing homework, a cliché from *beur* films. On their picaresque outdoor journey, the boys' encounters are aggressive or downright violent, as in black gang-crime films such as *Boyz N the Hood* (1991) and *Menace II Society* (1993). Between Saïd's opening altercation with a black neighbour and the ending's 'Mexican stand-off',[6] the boys clash with siblings, officials, policemen, journalists, a shopkeeper, a neighbour, a concierge, patrons at an art gallery (improbably holding a reception at 1 a.m.), a taxi driver, a man on an escalator, skinheads and each other. The few women who appear are special targets for aggression. The female journalist is particularly abused, as are the women at the art gallery and the female beggar in the *métro*. This is a testosterone-filled world, where boxing is recreation and voices on the soundtrack are virtually all male, with a few exceptions such as the television newscaster and a snippet from Edith Piaf's 'Je ne regrette rien' (Piaf's song could be doubly ironic, as a symbol of the displaced populist 'Franco-French' popular culture, and as the anthem of ultra-right paratroopers in Algeria). The rap music heard in the car, 'mon esprit part en couilles' by Expression Direkt, picks up on a particularly male reference

(*couilles* means 'testicles'), and the rap mixed by the DJ with Piaf is from 'Nick la Police' by Extreme-NTM, a 'hard-core' group, rather than, say, the more melodious and consensual MC Solaar.

It is hardly worth pointing out the male symbolism of the gun, the fetish object lost by the police and stolen by Vinz. For the poster of *La Haine*, Kassovitz rejected the image of a gun (D'Yvoire 1995, 103), replacing it with the angry eyes of the three heroes. But one of the most often reproduced images from the film is that of Vinz's pretend shoot at the camera with his fingers. The boys wear sports gear with combat connotations. Vinz's shaved head (not that different from the skinheads he beats up), Saïd's leather jacket, Hubert's fatigue trousers all connote a macho world. Their language is 'verlan', an old form of backslang (which inverts syllables) revived in the 1970s. Some verlan words have entered the national vocabulary, such as '*feuj*' (juif, Jew), '*keuf*' (flic, cop), '*meuf*' (femme), and of course '*beur*'; in fact *beur* is so common that a further form of verlan has transformed it into *rebeu*. These are familiar from Renaud's songs and films such as Josiane Balasko's *Les Keufs* (1987) and Claude Zidi's *Les Ripoux* (1984). But the *degree* to which the boys use verlan designates their language as *banlieue* gang-speak. The recurrent sexually aggressive insults of 'nique ta mère' (literally 'fuck your mother') and 'bâtard' (bastard) are relatively new additions to French slang, which speak of both Mediterranean and American influences.[7] In fact, audience reactions to *La Haine* record resistance from *banlieue* youth to what they perceived as excessive obscenity (*Télérama* 1995b, 24–7). But beyond the contents of dialogue and songs, as Mongin (1995) points out, male aggression is also affirmed by the sheer rhythm and pitch of the boys' hysterical verbal flow, especially Saïd's.[8] This is matched by their prancing and swaggering, Vinz in particular who spits, picks his nose, punches Hubert's punch-bag or the air.

Throughout the film, the masculinist stance of the young men is narratively justified by police aggression, itself a representation of the 'symbolic' violence visited upon them by society. It is also naturalized by the brilliant performances of Cassel, Koundé and Taghmaoui, by their energy and humour. The problem, as noted by Alexander (1995) and Reynaud (1996) is that their behaviour is presented as coextensive with the experience of the *banlieue*. *Banlieue* and *beur* films have always been characterised by a male focus. Women are denied subjectivity, their identity residing in their relation to the males, and consequently they do not participate in the depiction of *social* issues. When women take centre stage, as in Kassovitz's previous feature *Métisse* (as well as his 'model', Lee's *She's Gotta Have It* (1986), or the only female rap song in the *La Haine*-inspired CD[9]), the sexual immediately replaces the social. Kassovitz tellingly justifies the absence of women in *La Haine* as a desire 'to keep the idea [of the film] as pure as possible' (*Humanité-Dimanche* 1995). Beyond this banal sexism, however, *La Haine* is symptomatic of a deeper gender shift. Family and culture are mostly kept off-screen,

but what we see of them is female: both television newscaster and journalist are women. There are no fathers or male authority figures, in common with *banlieue* and *beur* films, where fathers are pitiable wrecks (*Le Thé*), psychotics (*De bruit et de fureur*) or just not there. *La Haine* takes the fathers' absence further, pointing to the feminization of labour and public life, and the fact that chronic male unemployment is entering its second generation. The young men are left adrift in a society where the only patriarchal figures are the 'bad fathers' of the police. Vinz's, Hubert's and Saïd's aimless wanderings in the empty *cité* and their disastrous trip through night-time Paris can be re-read in this light. Societal shifts have left them doubly redundant, in class and gender terms. But their mental *habitus* is still that of dominant masculinity, manifested by their aggressive verbal and body language, their occupation of public space, their ineffectual attempts at asserting authority over their sisters, and by their allegiance to a popular culture which is increasingly visible (clothes, graffiti) and audible (language, music) as its target audience is socially disempowered. This paradox is inscribed in the film in other ways, and in particular in the relationship between French and American culture, played out at the level of the film contents (the boys' culture) and of the film's style, to which I will now turn.

Designer *banlieue*

Compared with the dreary decors of *beur* and *banlieue* films, or the rough black-and-white look of *Etat des lieux*, *La Haine* is polished and seductive. It aims to shock *and* please, balancing its realism with a combination of the mannerism of the *cinéma du look* (Luc Besson, Jean-Jacques Beineix, Leos Carax), the (male) nervous energy of Scorsese, Tarantino and Woo, and the modish 'grunginess' of new British films such as *Trainspotting* (though the latter was released after *La Haine*).

Black-and-white stock is the most immediate feature with which *La Haine* straddles the realist/non-realist divide, but also, ultimately, it acts as the badge of its aestheticism. Initially planning to shoot the suburbs in black-and-white and Paris in colour, Kassovitz opted for black-and-white throughout, with a more sober *mise-en-scène* for Paris. Black-and-white may give the film an historical *cinéma-vérité* aura, but at the same time it signals distance from 'normal' (colour) documentary and from the naturalistic *beur* films. Second, black-and-white looks 'cool', like postmodern music videos; it establishes a link with *film noir* and recalls Scorsese's *Raging Bull* (1980) and Lee's *She's Gotta Have It*. Third, as in the latter film, black-and-white plays on the heroes' skin colour and texture, especially Hubert's, who is stereotypically introduced with glistening bare torso while training in his empty gym (another tribute to *Raging Bull*). Such a degree of aestheticization explains why, to Kassovitz's annoyance, *La Haine* was not as 'shocking' as he anticipated: 'Posh people would tell me the film was "fantastically truthful". I thought I would shock people more, but unfortunately not. There was a fashion phenomenon' (*Télérama* 1995a, 46).

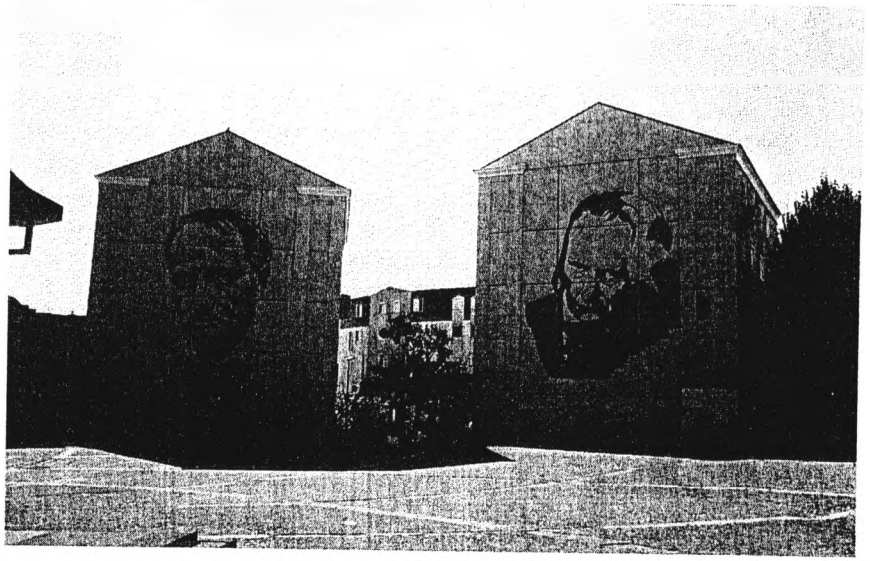
KASSOVITZ'S *LA HAINE*

La Haine – (from left to right) Vinz (Vincent Cassel), Saïd (Saïd Taghmaoui), Hubert (Hubert Kaoundé).

Kassovitz also negotiates the realist/non realist dichotomy through authorial intervention. First the 'in-jokes': after Hitchcock, Godard, Sorsese *et al*, he inserts a revealing cameo of himself as the skinhead beaten up by Vinz, and of his producer Christophe Rossignon as a taxi driver (double in-joke); Cassel's name appears on the letter box at Astérix's flat; his shaved head makes Vinz look like Kassovitz; Kassovitz's father appears in the art gallery; the attempt to 'switch off' the Eiffel Tower is a reference to *Un monde sans pitié* (1989, produced by *La Haine*'s Productions Lazennec). More subtle means reinforce Kassovitz's signature on the film text. The time counter which appears at intervals has no narrative function; but it gives the film urgency and exhibits the author's manipulation of his material. Flamboyant *mise-en-scène* effects punctuate *La Haine*, reminiscent, as Kassovitz admits, of music videos (he directed one in 1990, for French rapper Tonton David). The music video aesthetics can be seen, directly, in the scenes that are expertly cut to a musical number: the opening news footage, Hubert parcelling out his drugs, the break-dancing. Generally, black-and-white stock, rapid editing, striking changes in camera angles, asymmetrical compositions and direct address to the camera evoke 'MTV aesthetics'. The mobile camera restlessly tracks and pans, follows or precedes the three young men, hot on

their backs as in *Mean Streets* (1973), pausing to produce strong horizontal and diagonal compositions of their faces or the back of their heads, magnified by Cinemascope. The camera 'punches' the air and moves like a bullet through space (as in Besson's *Nikita* 1990). A few cuts evoke gun shots. Disorientation is aimed at: the 180-degree pan in the police station, the first view of Paris with its 'compressed zoom'. An extraordinary helicopter shot over the *cité* accompanies the musical mixture of rap and 'Je ne regrette rien' floating eerily above the buildings, a neat image of the film's deft merging of the social with the aesthetic. When Vinz hides in a cinema, his cigarette smoke soars in the air in ornate light patterns. The classic-realist flow of the boys' progress is interrupted by incongruous scenes such as an old man telling a story in the toilet, and several vignettes seen from Vinz's 'mind': his dancing to Jewish wedding music, the cow in the middle of the estate, the car going in fast reverse down the Paris street, the imaginary shooting of the policemen outside Les Halles.[10] The boys' shifting compositions within the frame conduct a sophisticated play on the gaze. They look straight at the camera, or conversely look on events from an off-centre position, leading, as Claire Vassé observed, to an unstable audience viewpoint, 'neither witness nor spectator' (Vassé 1995, 6). Even though, as Tarr (1997, 45) observes, the film gives Vinz a more prominent narrative position, the overall impression is of a dynamic interaction between the three. Furthermore, Saïd and Hubert dominate the oral space: Saïd with his incessant *tchatche*, Hubert with the emblematic framing story about a man who fell from the fiftieth floor (discussed below). When the old man tells his story (about the Holocaust) in the café toilet, an elaborate play on mirrors cuts up the space and the boys' bodies, graphically suggesting their shattered identity and disorientation.

Do *La Haine*'s visual and oral sophistication, its spectacular pleasures, undercut its 'authenticity' as has been suggested? I would reply that its spectacularization of the topic, though problematic, indicates a shrewd understanding of the social situation evoked by the film. When Hubert angrily tells the television journalists filming the *cité* that 'this is not Thoiry', he is alluding to a safari theme park near Paris but also to a wider media phenomenon which includes the film itself. News reportage which presents *banlieues* as exotic hells has been periodically, and rightly, accused of sensationalism, because of its concentration on the graphically violent. This is illustrated by Didier Daeninckx's brilliant short story 'Rodéo d'or' (1992, 79–92), based on real events, in which television journalists pay *banlieue* hooligans to joyride for their cameras, with tragic consequences. Georges Ferreboeuf, press officer for a 'difficult' suburb put it like this: 'Parisians come here with ready-made clichés and a partial view in mind. They show reality within a narrow framework, neglecting the "off-screen": everyday life' (Ferreboeuf 1996). This is not just PR rhetoric. From François Maspero's and Anaïk Frantz's ethnographic journey through the suburbs (Maspero 1990) to



La Haine – Clash of cultures: great French poets (Charles Baudelaire, left and Victor Hugo, right) on the murals of the La Noë estate in Chanteloup-les-Vignes, where *La Haine* was shot.

Bertrand and Nils Tavernier after their experience of filming *De l'autre côté du périphérique* (1997), many have voiced the gap between the multi-layered – violent and dysfunctional as well as peaceful and hard-working – reality of the *banlieue* and its dominant representation through violence. *La Haine* does concentrate on the 'narrow framework', arguably contributing to Chanteloup-les-Vignes' bad reputation, provoking further acts of violence. During a visit to the estate, as I walked round taking photographs, insults rang in the air, stones and bottles fell near where I was standing, forcing me to make a quick exit. It is hard to think that this was not an effect of *La Haine* turning La Noë, indeed, into a kind of Thoiry, attracting visitors such as myself. But the representation of violence, if it flatters delinquents' narcissism (Vinz's obsession with watching the riots on television), is also the only way of drawing attention: 'Young people understand . . . that violence is the only way of communicating with the outside world, the city, the country. If the neighbourhood explodes, if it scares people off, the attention is immediate' (Wittner in Garnier 1996, 65). While the more realistic, but more muted and localized, violence of the *beur* films did not export, Kassovitz understood that he needed *spectacular* male violence for *La Haine* to be successful on a large scale.

Black-blanc-*beur*, and American

Kassovitz's *La Haine* thus achieves a perfect amalgam between the 'sociological' and the 'aesthetic' tendencies in filmic depictions of the *banlieue*. The sociological anchorage of the film is clear, from the shooting on location to the references to current events: violence, unemployment, drugs, the sheer cultural void of the *banlieue* estate – hence the recognition and praise by French audiences and mainstream film criticism (the daily and weekly press, *Télérama*, etc.). At the same time, the film's aesthetic project, in particular its desire to avoid the traditional naturalism of many *beur* and banlieue films, is also evident: camera work, film stock, textual references all signal the high-profile *auteur*, hence his recognition by the French critical establishment (*Cahiers du cinéma*, *Positif*). Yet, the same sociological anchorage and *auteur* recognition is true, for example, of Brisseau's *De bruit et de fureur*, a film which had no popular success at home or abroad. The reason why *La Haine* achieved global recognition is that the film also harnesses its social depiction to international modes of representation, connecting it to the neo-*noir* violent thriller, and giving Kassovitz the accolade of the youth-oriented popular film press at home (*Première*, *Studio Magazine*) and abroad.

After a brief pre-credit black-and-white shot of rioting, the next image of *La Haine* is in colour: a blue-and-white terrestrial globe bursts into flame when a petrol bomb is thrown at it. The globe later reappears on the ironic 'The World Is Yours' posters (homage to *Scarface*) which Hubert looks at in disgust from the train, and which later Saïd alters with his spray can (changing the word 'vous'/yours to 'nous'/ours). On the soundtrack, Hubert's voice tells the story of 'a man who falls from the fiftieth floor of a building and keeps saying, so far so good . . . so far so good . . . what matters is not the fall but the landing'. The story is reprised twice by Hubert, in the middle of the film and at the end, with his voice once again off-screen, the word 'man' now replaced by 'society'. Next is a montage of riot images, which alternates documentary footage of CRS riot police fighting young people in Paris (the iconography is of inner Paris riots, the CRS reminiscent of May '68) with images of rioting in the film's *cité*, revealed to be 'television' as the set is switched off before the film proper begins. Over this sequence, Bob Marley's 'Burnin' and Lootin'' is heard. With this opening, Kassovitz blurs the distinction between documentary and fiction, and links international liberation struggles, French postwar history and 1990s *banlieue* unrest (Marley's song hovers faintly over the beginning of the film). Similarly, the Hughes Brothers' *Menace II Society* moves from the 1965 LA Watts riots to the 1993 'real' situation, before starting its fiction. Parallels between *La Haine* and black gang-crime films such as *Menace II Society* and *Boyz N the Hood* as well as Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* have been noted, although Lee's *Clockers*, released after *La Haine*, offers the closest comparison. Kassovitz's first feature *Métisse* (1993) recalled *She's Gotta Have It* in plot structure – a (mixed-race)

woman with two lovers, one black, one white – and in the character played by Kassovitz, dressed up like Lee in this film and in *Do the Right Thing*. From *Do the Right Thing*, *La Haine* also quotes the presence of a DJ and an altercation with 'Oriental' storekeepers (which also appears in *Menace II Society*). Yet, ironically, the main difference between *La Haine* and its African-American contemporaries is in the treatment of race. Where the world of *Menace II Society* and *Boyz N the Hood* is all-black, that of *La Haine* is mixed. Where Lee's films concentrate on racial conflict, *La Haine* (like *beur* films) focuses on the common struggle of mixed-race groups against the police and bourgeois society. This has led to accusations by Anglo-American critics that *La Haine* sweeps racism under the carpet (Alexander 1995; Tarr 1997) while, *a contrario*, French writers derided the 'politically correct' black-blanc-*beur* trio (Jousse 1995; Mongin 1995).

Kassovitz's trigger for *La Haine* was the real-life racist murder of Makomé, a young Zairean, in a Parisian police station. The film picks up on the well-documented racism of the French police, undiminished by the presence of *beur* and black policemen, as reflected in the film: Saïd remarks that 'An Arab does not survive for more than an hour in a police station'; the police in Paris 'don't see' Vinz, and go first for Saïd and Hubert, who are later submitted to racist humiliation. There are references to other racisms: black–*beur* antagonism, and especially anti-Semitism (the old man's story). Yet the racist murder remains merely a trigger in the film too. Kassovitz's statement that *La Haine* is a film about police *bavures* or 'blunders' (*Télérama* 1995a, 42) confirms a shift from racist to general police violence. (French police *bavures* – more than three hundred mortal 'blunders' have been recorded since 1981 – are so common that they are standard fare for comic films: see *Inspecteur La Bavure* (1980) and *Les Ripoux*.) While *La Haine*'s black-blanc-*beur* trio is perhaps too 'neat' in visual and ideological terms,[11] the higher degree of racial integration depicted in *La Haine*'s *cité*, compared to American ghettos, accurately reflects the French situation. This is especially true of second- or third-generation 'immigrants', raised and schooled in the same heterogenous milieux as young 'gaulois', as can be observed by anyone living in or visiting the *banlieues* (see also Bourdieu 1993). This does not mean that racism has disappeared, as shown by the success of the National Front in these same areas. The extent to which multi-ethnicity in post-colonial France is accurately represented in cultural productions is also a contested issue (Hargreaves and McKinney 1997). *La Haine* nevertheless inserts itself in an increasingly hybridized culture, especially that which addresses younger generations.

In featuring a mixed-race central trio, Kassovitz is in the tradition of *beur* cinema. Christian Bosséno (1992, 48) noted of the 1980s *beur* films that already 'The theme of racism . . . is virtually absent; all [young characters] suffer the same raw deal to an equal degree'. *Le Thé*, *Hexagone*, *Raï*, *Douce France*, etc. all put the accent on the 'raw deal' suffered by young people from

the *banlieue*. Reactions to *La Haine* from a mass youth audience 'made up of Vinz, Hubert and Saïd look-alikes' (*Télérama* 1995b, 24–7) were varied, but all addressed issues of class, not race. The French hip-hop scene is also noticeably mixed (Cannon 1997). Two of the most popular recent French comedies – *La Vérité si je mens* (1997, shot by *Raï* director Thomas Gilou) and *Les Trois frères* (1995, starring popular male comic trio Les Inconnus, which includes a black West Indian, Pascal Légitimus) – deal with multi-ethnic France. Both work through comic stereotypes (racial and otherwise) and elicit consensual, if sexist, humour. But they also testify to the increasing presence of multi-ethnic individuals in a range of popular cultural products. *Les Trois frères*, with its bonding mixed-race male trio, is like the comic flip-side of *La Haine*. However, like the *beur* films it remained national. In this respect too, *La Haine*'s international exposure comes from its recognition and celebration of another cultural difference which, in a profound sense, makes other cultural and racial differences increasingly obsolete: that of American culture, starting with the director's own cinephilia.

As D'Yvoire pointed out, 'Unlike many young French directors who are trained at FEMIS [the most prominent French film school], and who only swear by Godard, Pialat or Truffaut, Kassovitz readily quotes Scorsese and Spielberg' (1995, 103). Overt references abound as already mentioned, and one could add the introduction of characters similar to those of *Mean Streets*. The Jewish element can be seen as a version of Lee's and Scorsese's Italian-Americans. More subtly, Kassovitz makes his heroes inhabit somewhat anachronistically his own cinematic and visual culture, especially indebted to America. Vinz talking to himself in his bathroom mirror imitates the 1977 hero of *Taxi Driver*, where 'in reality' he would probably copy Bruce Willis. Similarly, the heroes' discussion of 'Pif' and 'Hercule', characters from French Communist comics dating back to the 1950s, probably owes more to Kassovitz's own background than to that of the three young men. The nervy film style itself is referential. Susan Morrison (1995, 46) perceptively details how Kassovitz echoes Scorsese, with his 'fluid camera . . . a reliance on idiosyncratic male actors like De Niro and Keitel; a carefully selected and coded soundtrack and a near-hysterical tension lying just beneath the surface, ready to erupt at any moment'.

La Haine's protagonists' language, clothes and music, as already mentioned, are visibly and audibly American-influenced. Kassovitz's first short *Fierrot le pou* (1990, the title an ironic homage to Godard) parodied his passion for black American culture. The image of a 'wannabe' black; Kassovitz plays a hopeless white basketball player who dreams he is black to impress a young black woman. *La Haine* continues this theme, showing the impact of hip-hop culture among *banlieue* youth. This has prompted a debate about whether *La Haine* just mimics American culture. Particularly critical is Alexander (1995, 45), who sees the import of American culture as depoliticizing and links the film to 'trendy fashion spreads', while Tarr (1997, 41) queries Kassovitz's legitimacy in using black American culture, on account of his own white (Jewish) bourgeois background. While on the one hand I agree with Chris Darke that '*La Haine* is more than simply a capable reworking of its American models' (1995, 43), I would also argue that *La Haine*, though indeed 'exploiting' a deeply commodified form of black American culture and celebrating American film-makers, is political in showing the extent to which American culture has colonized French working-class youth culture. But it is violence which most powerfully links *La Haine* to American cinema, to the history of the Western and of *film noir*. Rather than the embedded localized violence of the *beur* and *banlieue* films or of contemporary French thrillers such as *L627*, the violence in *La Haine*, symbolized by the 'Mexican stand-off' inhabits the international *noir* territory of Scorsese, Tarantino, Woo *et al.*, just as the social context of the *cité* has been abstracted, as discussed earlier.

The new *apaches*

Compared to the hero of *Etat des lieux* who has a well-articulated political programme, *La Haine*'s protagonists are anomic, helpless and hopeless. Their aggression, against the police and other institutions, is random and self-defeating, symbolized by their circular trajectory. Unlike their equivalents in Scorsese's and Lee's movies, or the *beur* films, Saïd, Hubert and Vinz (despite Saïd's bragging) have no sexual life, symbolized by the fact that none of them could drive the car they attempt to steal. As traditional family roles disappear, so does generational conflict; the boys stay at home in a state of perpetual childhood. *La Haine* thus offers a vision of French 'proletarian heroes' which fundamentally recasts their historical figuration in French cinema and French culture.

In the Poetic Realist films of the 1930s and in the social comedies and dramas of the 1970s, the charismatic heroes – played, typically, by the young Jean Gabin and the young Gérard Depardieu – were the emblems of French *noir* cinema. Central to this was their alienation from a community and their virile struggle against father figures: see *Le Jour se lève* or *Le Quai des brumes* for the former and *Les Valseuses* for the latter. In *La Haine*, there are no fathers (an important point in a national cinema which traditionally celebrates the patriarch) and there is no visible community to be alienated from. *Clockers*, Lee's story of exclusion and violence among young black males in a Brooklyn housing project, is also bookended by stylized depictions of violence. But the visually stunning images of blood and torn bodies, while used as abstract expressions of violence, are also a graphic depiction of the *effect* of violence on the community. We see local people looking at the bodies. *Clockers*, unlike *La Haine*, also offers some viable older male figures. *La Haine* starts with images of socially anchored political struggle but ends on an isolated incident in a desolate – though visually pleasing –

setting. In this nihilistic conclusion lies the double 'political' message of the film.

Firstly, Kassovitz detaches his heroes from a specifically French history of proletarian representation, through American glamour both in his film style and in the youth culture he depicts. Hip-hop culture, however, points to another kind of American influence, that of the rampant neo-capitalism which created the ghettos. Though state involvement in welfare is still greater in France, the most pessimistic predictions see the 'inverse utopia' (Wacquant 1993) of the American ghettos as the future world order: a growing underclass of *exclus*, in which 'old-fashioned' divisions of class and race are irrelevant. Vinz, Hubert and Saïd already inhabit this world. The beginning of *La Haine* recalled the 1960s political struggles. But the rest of the film shows the self-destructive, consumer-hungry, a-political behaviour typical of international ghetto youth culture. Second, if the heroes of *La Haine* can be fitted into a French historical frame of reference, it is not that of the 1930s working-class heroes, nor of the Communist 'red suburbs' of the 1960s and 1970s, but that of the nineteenth-century 'dangerous classes', the hordes of 'savage' *apaches* on the fringes of the city, menacing bourgeois society. Yet Vinz, Hubert and Saïd do not even partake of the romanticism attached to the *apache*. The film's chilling ending takes place under giant murals representing French poets, put in place by the well-meaning, if not altogether perspicacious, architects of Chanteloup-les-Vignes – the murals are a line-up of undoubtedly great but typically (male) high cultural figures: Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Valéry, Victor Hugo, Gérard de Nerval and Stéphane Mallarmé. As Vinz falls under Baudelaire and Rimbaud, he stresses the failure of the cultural policies that were supposed to help the *cités*. He also symbolizes his, and his friends', alienation from the romantic tradition of poetic rebellion which traditionally informed the figure of the French proletarian rebel.

Notes

1 *Le Film français*, 2584 (10 November 1995), 23, 'Pourquoi Jodie Foster parraine "La Haine"?'. Foster is also producing Kassovitz's fourth feature (Marie 1998).
2 'La France est une banlieue merdique'; Renaud, 'La Chanson du loubard', Muriel Huster and Renaud Séchand, Polydor, 1977. Another of Renaud's popular songs from that period was 'Mon HLM'.
3 Darty is the name of an electrical goods chain store.
4 'Dealer pour survivre' (Drug dealing as survival), Expression Direkt, *La Haine*, musiques inspirées du film. ©1995 Delabel.
5 An incident on the shooting of Pierre Jolivet's *Ma Petite entreprise* on a Parisian *banlieue* estate in Fontenay-sous-Bois in late 1998, between local youth and film extras, shows the continuing problems encountered by 'outsiders' filming the *banlieue* reality.
6 A 'Mexican stand-off' means two characters holding each other up simultaneously with a gun to their head; this classic Western feature has been recently revisited by Woo and Tarantino.
7 'Niquer' is from the Arabic, and 'nique ta mère', i.e. 'fuck your mother', is reminiscent of 'motherfucker'.
8 It should be noted that the reception of this verbal flow is problematic outside France, where the necessary subtitles alienate further from what is a difficult language to understand in the first place, given the amount of slang. There is also arguably a second-degree alienation for English-speaking but non-American audiences, as the subtitles use American-specific slang.
9 See note 5 above.
10 The shooting of the nightclub bouncer is more ambivalent: the positioning of Vinz in the frame suggests the scene happens in his imagination, yet the published script indicates it is 'for real'.
11 The rhyme with bleu-blanc-rouge (the tricolore) also means that the expression has long been a favourite, from a hip-hop dance group founded in 1984 to the gushing congratulations over the victory of the multi-racial French football team in the July 1998 World Cup.

Selected bibliography

Alexander, Karen (1995), '*La Haine*', *Vertigo*, 5 (autumn/winter).

Augé, Marc (1995) *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe, London, Verso.

Bosséno, Christian (1992), 'Immigrant Cinema: National Cinema – the Case of Beur Film', in Richard Dyer, and Ginette Vincendeau (eds), *Popular European Cinema*, London, Routledge.

Bourdieu, Pierre (sous la direction de) (1993) *La Misère du monde*, Paris, Editions du Seuil.

Cannon, Steve (1997), '*Paname City Rapping*: B-Boys in the *Banlieues* and Beyond', in Alec G. Hargreaves, and Mark McKinney (eds) *Post-Colonial Cultures in France*, London and New York, Routledge.

Daeninx, Didier (1992), *Zapping*, Paris, Denoël (Folio).

Darke, Chris (1995), '*La Haine*', *Sight and Sound* (November).

Douhaire, Samuel (1998), 'Etats des lieux', *Libération* (13–14 June).

Favier, Gille and Kassovitz, Mathieu (1995), *Jusqu'ici tout va bien . . .* , Arles, Actes Sud.

Ferreboeuf, Georges (1996), quoted in 'Médias et banlieues: la haine?', http://www.lyoncapitale

Garnier, Jean-Pierre (1996), *Des Barbares dans la cité: De la tyrannie du marché à la violence urbaine*, Paris, Flammarion.

Hargreaves, Alec G. and McKinney, Mark (eds) (1997), *Post-Colonial Cultures in France*, London and New York, Routledge.

Humanité Dimanche (1995), interview with Mathieu Kassovitz, 270 (18–24 May).

Jousse, Thierry (1995), 'Prose combat', *Cahiers du cinéma*, 492 (June) 32–5.

Marie, Michel (ed.) (1998), *Le Jeune cinéma français*, Paris, Nathan Université.

Maspero, François (1990), *Les Passagers du Roissy-Express*, Paris, Editions du Seuil. Translated by Paul Jones, as *Roissy Express*, London, Verso, 1994.

Mongin, Olivier (1995), 'Regarde les tomber: à propos de *La Haine*', *Esprit* (August–September).

Morrison, Susan (1995), '*La Haine*, *Fallen Angels*, and Some Thoughts on Scorsese's Children', *CineAction!*, 39 (December).
Positif (1995), interview with Mathieu Kassovitz (by Thomas Bourguignon and Yann Tobin), no. 412 (June), 4–13.
Reader, Keith (1995), 'After the riot', *Sight and Sound* (November).
Rémy, Serge (1995), 'Banlieue haute tension', *L'Humanité* (29 May), 20.
Reynaud, Bérénice (1996), 'Le 'hood', *Film Comment*, 32 (2) (March/April).
Robache, Thomas and Saragoussi, Pierre (1998), *Banlieues: tant que ça tiendra*, Paris, Denoël, Documents Actualités.
Styan, David (1995), 'So Far . . . Everything is OK!', *Vertigo* 5 (autumn/winter).
Tarr, Carrie (1997) 'Ethnicity and Identity in *Métisse* and *La Haine* by Mathieu Kassovitz', in Tony Chafer (ed.) *Multicultural France*, Working Papers on Contemporary France, vol. 7, University of Portsmouth.
Télérama (1995a), '*La Haine*', interview with Mathieu Kassovitz (by Vincent Rémy), 2368 (31 May), 40–6.
Télérama (1995b), '*La Haine* partagée', report on audience interviews (by Marie-Elisabeth Rouchy, Isabelle Danel and Bernard Génin), 2372 (28 June), 24–7.
Tremois, Claude-Marie (1997), *Les Enfants de la liberté: Le Jeune cinéma français des années 90*, Paris, Editions du Seuil.
Vassé, Claire (1995), '*La Haine*, un regard métisse', *Positif*, 412 (June), 6–7.
Vigo, Luce (1995), 'Ce cinéma qui habite la banlieue', *Regards* (September).
Wacquant, Loïc J. D. (1993), 'De l'Amérique comme utopie à l'envers', in Pierre Bourdieu (sous la direction de), *La Misère du monde*, Paris, Editions du Seuil.
D'Yvoire, Christophe (1995), 'Douze mois de haine', *Studio* (December), 102–5.

APPENDIX

Mathieu Kassovitz (1967 –): filmography

1990 *Fierrot le pou* (short) (also actor)
1990 *Peuples du monde* (music video for Tonton David)
1991 *Cauchemar blanc* (short)
1992 *Assassins* (short) (also actor)
1993 *Métisse* (also actor)
1995 *La Haine* (also actor)
1997 *Assassin(s)* (also actor)
1997 *Lumières sur un massacre* (short, part of anti-landmine film)

Other films cited in the text

L'Ami de mon amie, Eric Rohmer (1987)
La Belle équipe, Julien Duvivier (1936)
Boyz N the Hood, John Singleton (USA 1991)
Clockers, Spike Lee (USA 1995)
La Crise, Coline Serreau (1992)
De bruit et de fureur, Jean-Claude Brisseau (1988)

De l'autre côté du périphérique, Bertrand and Nils Tavernier (1997)
Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle (*Two or Three Things I Know about Her*), Jean-Luc Godard (1967)
Die Hard (3) (*With a Vengeance*), John McTiernan (USA 1995)
Do the Right Thing, Spike Lee (USA 1989)
Douce France, Malik Chibane (1995)
Etat des lieux, Jean-François Richet (1995)
Une femme mariée, Jean-Luc Godard (1964)
Gazon maudit, Josiane Balasko (1995)
Hexagone, Malik Chibane (1994)
Le Hussard sur le toit (*The Horseman on the Roof*), Jean-Paul Rappeneau (1995)
Inspecteur La Bavure, Claude Zidi (1980)
Le Jour se lève (*Daybreak*), Marcel Carné (1939)
Les Keufs, Josiane Balasko (1987)
Laisse béton, Serge Le Péron (1984)
Loulou, Maurice Pialat (1979)
Ma 6-T va crack-er, Jean-François Richet (1997)
Mean Streets, Martin Scorsese (USA 1973)
Menace II Society, The Hughes Brothers (USA 1993)
Un monde sans pitié, Eric Rochant (1989)
Nikita, Luc Besson (1990)
Nogent, Eldorado du dimanche, Marcel Carné (1929)
Les Nuits de la pleine lune (*Full Moon in Paris*), Eric Rohmer (1984)
Numéro deux, Jean-Luc Godard (1975)
Le Plus beau métier du monde, Gérard Lauzier (1996)
Le Quai des brumes (*Port of Shadows*), Marcel Carné (1938)
Raging Bull, Martin Scorsese (USA 1980)
Raï, Thomas Gilou (1995)
Les Ripoux, Claude Zidi (1984)
Romuald et Juliette, Coline Serreau (1989)
Rue des Prairies, Denys de la Patellière (1959)
Salut, cousin!, Merzak Allouache (1996)
Scènes de ménage, Claire Simon (1991)
Série noire, Alain Corneau (1979)
She's Gotta Have It, Spike Lee (USA 1986)
Le Thé au harem d'Archimède, Mehdi Charef (1985)
Trainspotting, Danny Boyle (UK 1996)
Les Trois frères, Didier Bourdon (1995)
The Usual Suspects, Bryan Singer (USA 1995)
Les Valseuses, Bertrand Blier (1973)
La Vérité si je mens, Thomas Gilou (1997)

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

Introduction

Philip Dodd

I'm not quite sure whether we're at a funeral or a birth in having this conference – in other words, whether what we are talking about is the death of an old kind of Europe or the birth of a new one. It was Hegel who said that the owl of history only flies at dusk; and if that's the case, then the obsession with Europe may be precisely because at least one idea of Europe is dying. Nevertheless, if you look back over the last two hundred years of European history, you can excavate the ways the idea of Europe has been variously constituted through history.

I read Kenneth Clark's *Civilisation* the other week and it's fascinating to notice that Clark effectively excludes Spain from Europe on the grounds that it's simply barbarous. So it's well worth thinking that Europe is constituted not only on ethnic and racial grounds, which I suppose bears most heavily on us now, but also in terms of nation-states. And in those terms, if we are breaking from an idea of Europe, are we talking about new European identities or are we talking about new identities in Europe? I think that distinction is worth pondering. It may be that we should no longer think of Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou* as a European movie but rather as part of Catalan modernism. On the other hand, if we are talking about new identities in Europe, it's also perfectly clear to me that that doesn't mean you can simply shuffle off the past, because those dead generations do weigh like a nightmare upon the brains of the living. And it seems that in some real way the discussion today not only has to come to terms with what is happening now, but also with what has happened in the past.

In Screening Europe: Identity, Difference and Contemporary European Cinema. Ed. Duncan Petrie. London: British Film Institute, 1992.

HEGEMONY-IN-TROUBLE

Nostalgia and the Ideology of the Impossible in European Cinema

Ien Ang

Europe can no longer be understood by starting out from Europe itself.
Jean Baudrillard

Baudrillard's *Amérique* is in fact, at least in part, a book about Europe. After two and a half months of travelling through the vastness of America, the French philosopher started brooding about what is often offhandly called the Continent (with a big C). He notes on his return that:

> What strikes you immediately in Paris is that you are in the nineteenth century. Coming from Los Angeles, you land back in the 1800s. Every country bears a sort of historical predestination, which almost definitively determines its characteristics. For us, it is the bourgeois model of 1789 – and the interminable decadence of that model – that shapes our landscape. There is nothing we can do about it: everything here revolves around the nineteenth-century bourgeois dream.[1]

A sense of the fatal, of radical fatalism, runs through the bulk of Baudrillard's work, so it is not surprising that he evokes here a sense of inevitability, the inevitability of predestination, in Europe's contemporary condition, as being haunted by the grandiose dreams of its own past. Baudrillard's claim that France is condemned to live its present in the shadow of the dreams of the French Revolution is an apt diagnosis for the contradictions of a typically European structure of feeling. It is the structure of feeling of the Old World, characterised by smug complacency on the one hand and by unrecognised nostalgia on the other. In fact, the two tendencies go so well together that Europeans derive a profound sense of self-confident, undoubting comfort from it. And it is a structure of feeling, I am afraid, that makes contemporary Europe rather ill prepared for the cultural renewal that is needed to come to terms with its changed position in the world. As with all

change, it has to begin with an altered sense of self. So the question to be raised is how Europe can start redefining its historically sedimented 'identity' and its habits of thought and action.

Surely, being European is neither a fixed nor a homogeneous thing; it means something different in different parts of Europe and at different moments of Europe's heterogeneous histories. Talk about 'Europe' as if it were a single entity is therefore deeply problematic, not only for reasons of the obvious internal diversity and conflict that rifts the continent in many different ways, but also because of the ideological and political significance of 'Europeanness' in world history. Still, it is precisely the promotion of such unified and renovated Europeanness which seems to be implied and strived for in the construction of the European Single Market in 1992, and culturally articulated in hegemonic media endeavours such as the late Robert Maxwell's newspaper *The European*. There is no doubt, then, that the forging of a new, pan-European identity suited to the economic and political necessities of the twenty-first century, 'a common European home' in Mikhail Gorbachev's phrase, is invested with considerable desire in official European culture today. However, it is clear that such a project is bound to be contradictory and full of conflicts.

Or to put it differently: what are we to make of the current obsession with 'Europe' among Europeans themselves? What is Europe's place in today's world? After all, the idea of Europe as more than just the name to describe a geographical region (whose boundaries towards the East are uncertain anyway), but as a cultural unity with moral superiority and rational supremacy, has underpinned the legitimacy of universal European dominance throughout the world in the modern period.[2] So, European power and authority, however benign and in the spirit of whatever 'new world order', can never be reasserted innocently, given the legacy of European colonialism and imperialism which inaugurated the emergence of today's thoroughly interdependent but unequal world system in the first place.[3] It is therefore important to address the issue of 'post-colonialism' in any discussion about the contours of a politically viable European 'identity' of the future.[4]

I was asked to shed light on these questions through a discussion of a number of European films of the 80s, among others Pedro Almodóvar's *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios*, Jean-Luc Godard's *Passion*, Claire Denis's *Chocolat* and Emir Kusturica's *Time of the Gypsies*. (I have decided to leave Jarman's *The Tempest* out of my considerations here because I find the film quite unwatchable, not only for formalist reasons but also because I lack the cultural capital which is such a taken-for-granted part of Britishness: Shakespeare. A reminder of the partiality of preferred traditions of Europeanisms!)

The conference organisers told me that 'in different ways these films pose questions of European identity and European cinematic expression'. Of course, the cultural politics of this particular selection and its framing is worth enquiring in itself. For example, we might wonder whether it is really the cinema which should be the focus of examination and intervention in the (re)construction of representations of Europe. Isn't television a much more relevant or salient site of cultural production in this respect, especially given recent developments in transborder satellite transmission across Europe and related policy ambitions (in the context of the preservation of the lofty European tradition of public service broadcasting) such as the promotion of European co-productions? This is also to raise the rather neglected issue of European audiences and their divisions and differentiations, that is, the issue of circulation and consumption of these screen images and how they are interpreted and appropriated in multiple contexts. Let us not dwell on these considerations, but stick rather to the conference's title, which asks us to query how these films shape European images of post-colonialism. Let me take this opportunity, then, to use these films as a starting-point to think about some of the peculiar difficulties of European identity today.

I am forced to think about these questions while being physically removed from European space, and the tyranny of distance imposed by temporarily being 'tucked away' (from a European perspective) in Australia works as a liberating force to clarify the relativeness, and specificity of these European concerns. In a time when the ruthless, levelling force of global capitalism is spawning to an ever more encompassing extent the establishment of a global *cultural* order, the politics of cultural identity, construed as the foregrounding and promotion of particular, local-bound senses of cultural distinctiveness and difference, has gained an unprecedented relevance and urgency all over the world. However, since identity cannot be constructed in a vacuum but can only be forged through the active demarcation of a self in relation to some other, identity politics everywhere draws into its mode of operation a necessarily comparative spirit. And in today's global culture, the West, and arguably European culture in particular, still constitutes the universal point of reference in relation to which others define themselves as particularities. To give a trivial example, even Australia's casual self-definition as 'Down Under' only makes sense in the context of acceptance of a Eurocentric cartography of the globe. On the other hand, most of my European friends have urged me to come back 'home' soon, declaring simply and categorically that Australia is just too far away, that is, beyond the European horizon. The 'centre' experiences distance differently than does the 'periphery'.

The legacy of colonialism and imperialism, then, grants that Europe

is still considered, both inside and outside Europe itself, as the real and imagined cultural (if not economic) centre of the world, the norm of human civilisation, which has put other cultures and peoples in a relation of subordination to itself. But in both theory and practice there is a growing sense of self-confidence and assertion of cultural autonomy and self-determination among the previously colonised. Post-colonial forms of cultural expression and representation are emerging everywhere in the peripheries, defying and challenging the received standards and perspectives of the European centre.[5] It is this challenge that European hegemony is now facing up to, an embarrassing predicament in which 'Europe' inevitably finds itself in the position of the father whose law is being undermined.

Europe's predicament, in other words, is analogous to the predicament of men in the face of the challenge of feminism. In this respect, it is worth pointing at the excessively patriarchal nature of official European culture. In *The Great Museum*, a book on the representation of European history in Europe's monuments, Australian cultural critic Donald Horne observes that the legitimisation of male authority is one of the most persistent dominant values by which European greatness has been celebrated and commemorated.[6] With the exception of some virtuous female symbols such as the Virgin Mary and Jeanne d'Arc, or the use of the sexualised female image to represent an idea such as Liberty, women are simply excluded from Europe's official, high-cultural self-representation. There is, in short, a profoundly masculinist bias in the European public sphere, which was perpetuated and reinforced, not undercut, by the emancipatory bourgeois movement of the French Revolution which still, *pace* Baudrillard, decisively shapes contemporary European sensibility.[7]

This is not the place to examine the specificity of European patriarchy and the particular problems it poses for feminism in Europe.[8] Suffice it to note that it is no wonder that even in the 'post-feminist' era of today, European women are still on the verge of a nervous breakdown! Spanish director Pedro Almodóvar's film is quite double-hearted about female frustration: on the one hand giving ample space, if mockingly, to the acting-out of women's rage (invariably caused by machismo selfishness), but at the same time presenting female solidarity as utterly fragile and the last resort for women to regain self-respect in their resignation to their defeat and powerlessness. The one feminist character in the film runs off with the despised male anti-hero who gets away with all the heartache, despair and anger he caused in the first place. In the end, then, patriarchal masculinity is put on comic display here, only to leave male superiority somewhat bruised but ultimately untouched in the film's closure. In this sense, the very representation of the female 'other' as being 'on the verge of a nervous

breakdown' can be seen as a masculinist strategy to accommodate and trivialise the critical challenge of feminism. The film's reassuring message is that patriarchal power relationships are impossible to overturn. As we shall see, as with patriarchy, so for Europe.

What, then, about Father Europe's response to the assault on its superiority? After all, in this post-colonial world, the European problem, much like the problem of male dominance, is the problem of dominance-in-distress, hegemony-in-trouble. In other words, while previously colonised peoples and cultures are constructing their present by struggling out of the derivative identities imposed upon them in the past, the Europeans are in a quite different predicament: they are logically forced to come to terms with their waning cultural hegemony and to redefine themselves accordingly, as particular rather than universal, as located rather than transcendental, specific rather than general.

However, the power-laden, exploitative cultural encounters of the past will not easily give way to an acceptance of cultural difference on equal terms. The task for Europe, then, is to stop relating to others by taking itself as the standard. Unfortunately (although I can only give a crudely simplified and perhaps unforgivingly generalised account here), the dominant tendency within European self-consciousness today is one which disavows rather than recognises this post-colonial circumstance. It seems to me that while Europe is now increasingly aware of its own particularity, this particularity tends to be defended and advanced in relation to the more recent global imperial powers, especially America[9] and, more recently, Japan. As a consequence, Europe's own colonialist and imperialist past, and its far-reaching cultural impact on the peoples and cultures subjugated under its rule, remains relatively unaddressed, and Europe's 'guilt' largely unprocessed. Consider, for example, French Minister of Culture Jack Lang's well-known tirade against the threat posed by American cultural imperialism to European audiovisual culture, which was expressed in a tone utterly confident about the absolute value of the latter and totally oblivious of Europe's own long history as a cultural imperialist.

Europe's impotence in productively dealing with its colonialist past can be highlighted through a reading of Claire Denis's film *Chocolat*. *Chocolat* recalls the last years of French West African colonialism through the memory of a young white woman, whose name is, significantly enough, France, and who in the late 1950s grew up as the daughter of a French district officer in Cameroon. The film is about the subjective *experience* of colonialism from both the perspective of the colonised, personified by the family's black servant Protée, and that of the little girl who was too young to understand what colonial power was about and who treated Protée as both her friend and her

subordinate. For reasons that need not be explicated here the uneasy bond between the two ended abruptly, and incomprehensibly to France, almost coinciding with the end of the colonial period. When France returns to Cameroon many year later, in the 1980s, she finds herself unable to recover her colonial childhood; she'd like to see the house her family lived in, but isn't sure whether she should. Protée does not reappear.[10]

The film, then, problematises the difficulty, if not impossibility, of an unproblematic post-colonial re-encounter (and reconciliation) between coloniser and colonised, because those who were colonised have changed, no longer defining themselves in terms of dependency and marginalisation, no longer in silent, private and impotent wrath and suppressed desire as was the overtly loyal Protée, but busy transforming the colonial legacy into an emergent, self-determined identity, a society of their own. In fact, what France, or *France*, must realise is the ultimate *irrelevance* of her presence in this post-colonial African place: none of the locals pays any attention to her, she talks to no one, remains a bystander, an invisible onlooker. The only 'other' she teams up with is an African-American who came to Africa in the hope of rejoining his 'brothers' but finds that his identity is American, not African. 'They've no use of my being here. Here I am nothing, a fantasy,' he says. *His own* fantasy, we might add, just as France finds her past to have disappeared, unrecuperable – meaning (so the film suggests by emphasising France's detached silence) that she has no identity, reduced to nothingness. 'No past, no future.'

As a (provisional) ending, this lonely present held in timeless suspension is troublesome. If *Chocolat* can be read as a recognition of European inability to come to terms with its own colonialist record, it does so without offering us a way out of the repressed crisis of identity which remains so unacknowledged in the larger European context. The black American apparently has an easier job: his sense of meaning and purpose would be regained once he recognised America as his site of struggle for emergent identity.[11] For the white European, however, it is all too easy to be overwhelmed by a redemptive but unproductive sense of loss, to cling to a residual identity and be stuck in it because it is so comforting. To be sure, it is precisely a celebration of such a sense of loss, stripped of its historical particularity and unversalised in terms of the predicament of the modern human condition, which we encounter all too often in European audiovisual culture. We only have to think of Bertolucci's *The Sheltering Sky*, which uses an offensively aestheticising, orientalist representation of the non-Western 'other' as an alibi to focus in on the self-indulgent, tormented and unsuccessful search for meaning on the part of a bunch of individuals of European descent.

It is in the nature of hegemony to take its authority and universal validity for granted; a hegemony-in-trouble therefore tends to seek refuge in a set of defence mechanisms acting as modes of denial of its own creeping marginalisation. It may be a perverse leap of argument, but perhaps this is the very reason why Europe persists in living in the nineteenth century, as Baudrillard noticed after returning from the New World. This was the high period of European hegemony, sustained and legitimated by the progressivist, modernist values of post-French Revolution, post-Enlightenment bourgeois capitalism. Large parts of European self-understanding still seem to be dominated by a particularly strong faith in the universalist claims of the project of modernity which, according to Habermas, a quintessentially European thinker, remains uncompleted.[12] What is important to note, however, is not that Europeanist modernity is uncompleted but that it proves to be increasingly *uncompleteable* as a result of the waning of European hegemony.

It is in this sense that we can understand Baudrillard's claim that the crisis of Europe is 'a crisis of historical ideals facing up to the impossibility of their realisation'. If, as Fredric Jameson would have it, History is What Hurts, then what looms large in modern European historical consciousness are its failed Utopias: from the Enlightment to May 1968, from Empire to Thatcherism, from the Third Reich to German unification, from the dictatorship of the proletariat to *glasnost*. European modernity – social and philosophical, cultural and political – is driven by, and sets itself up through, a persistent, totalising longing for the impossible, perfect state, the perfect society. Even contemporary discourse on a United Europe is often invested with such high-minded Utopian overtones, even though the transcendental *Weltanschauung* underlying it is primarily a pragmatic one given the necessities of global capitalism today. But, as Baudrillard notes with a sense of weariness which in itself confirms the structure of feeling he discerns, 'Our (*sic*) problem is that our old goals – revolution, progress, freedom – will have evaporated before they were achieved, before they became reality. Hence our melancholy.'[13]

Godard's film *Passion* even radically *stages* this melancholic passion for the impossible: the impossibility of cinema itself, the impossibility of narrative, the impossibility of love, the impossibility of arriving at anything. A Polish film director, Jerzy, doesn't succeed in making a film which, significantly enough, attempts to recreate the scenarios of classic European paintings by Rembrandt, Goya, Delacroix and others in the form of tableaux vivants. He doesn't have a story, and his producer and crew are getting desperate. 'Is it because of what's happening in Poland?' they ask him. We don't get an answer. Poland in the early eighties, we should guess, was in the midst of upheaval led

by Solidarnosc, the site of a passionate struggle for changing the present. But such passion, so concludes *Passion*, is no longer possible in contemporary France; all that's left is a passionate (but doomed) quest of passion itself. So there is no story to tell. 'You have to live stories before inventing them,' says Jerzy.

If this jaded posture can be seen as symptomatic for the present state of European self-consciousness, it explains why European cultural concerns are often so inward-looking, so self-enclosed, an implosion of a fetishistic, unbearable heaviness of being. Such melancholic longing for the impossible is an apology for self-centredness: it amounts to a naturalised sense of loss and the cultivation of nostalgia. It is not surprising that, of the films being discussed here, only *Mujeres*, which presents itself as a popular comedy (although even here the popular is self-consciously inflected with the formalist devices of modernist art: a genuinely *popular* European cinema seems to be an impossibility), manages to avoid the mood of nostalgic melancholy (but at an ideological cost, as we have seen), in contrast with the artistic minimalism of *Chocolat*'s narrative style and its moody ending.

In this respect, Europe's overdeveloped high culture, with its absolutist aestheticising tendency, may only exacerbate the problem. It is this tendency which tends to equate legitimate European cinema with art cinema (as evidenced by all the films discussed here), European television with 'quality' television. Art and quality – terms by which European culture promotes itself as absolute, identity which relegates all difference to the realm of the irrelevant (unless it can be appropriated within the categories of 'art' and 'quality'). However, this unchecked Eurocentrism obscures Europe's own increasing irrelevance in other regions of the world as the experience of colonialism retreats into memory.

The problem for Europe, then, is to learn how to marginalise itself, to see its present in its historical particularity and its *limitedness*, so that Europeans can start relating to cultural 'others' in new, more modest and dialogic ways. Godard's echoing of Lyotard's thesis that the period of grand narratives – that is, the period of hegemonic European modernity – is over should thus not lead to the conclusion that there are no longer stories to tell; on the contrary, it is the abandonment of the search for the universalising 'big story' which should open up the space for the telling of smaller, more particular stories. In the context of today's global interdependence, such stories carve out the possibility of insisting on the fact 'that every identity is placed, positioned, in a culture, a language, a history'.[14] At the same time, claiming that you no longer have stories to tell, as *Passion* suggests, is only a way of evading the confrontation with the limits of your own particularity; identity is thus made invisible, groundless,

generalised. It is for this reason that *Chocolat*'s ending is so disturbing. The film's emphasis on France's powerlessness in articulating her own, present, post-colonialist identity effectively neutralises the film's potentially enabling call for European self-interrogation. In the end, *Chocolat*, too, is a Eurocentric film.

That such self-interrogation is also important for Europe itself is clear. As most post-colonialist societies in Europe are becoming increasingly multicultural and multi-ethnic, an upshot (and a reminder) of the colonial past which cannot be denied or disregarded, a Europe that sees its culture as relative and permeable is essential if the narrowminded nationalism and petty racism that infects the continent is to be overcome. It is against this background, of course, that a film like *Time of the Gypsies* is significant. After all, the Gypsies are one of the oldest cultural 'others' within Europe's borders, a group of people whose inferior status has not changed for centuries, who have always been easily ostracised everywhere in Europe precisely because they do not form or belong to a 'nation'. If anything, Europe's treatment of the Gypsies only exemplifies the fundamental problems Europeans have with difference and otherness. In this sense, I am slightly concerned about the politics of *Time of the Gypsies*. To be sure, I found the film 'impressive', but even to use this word to describe the film's effect already marks a certain distance, a certain objectification. Although the film deals with the inside world of Gypsy life and experience, the film's magic realist aesthetics, thoroughly within the accepted codes of art cinema, might only serve to reinforce (for European audiences at least) the absolute 'otherness' of Gypsy culture, totally wrapped up in its own concerns and frustrations, outside modernity, forever condemned to remain at the fringes of mainstream Europe.

What, then, given this context, are the prospects for the future? Baudrillard, for one, is pessimistic: he too succumbs to the ideology of the impossible. 'Our European culture', he says, 'is one that has staked its all on the universal and the danger menacing it is that of perishing by the universal.'[15] But a pessimism of the intellect which duplicates itself in a pessimism of the will is bound to be vainly effete and impotent. A more positive gesture comes from Stuart Hall, who derives optimism from the empowering force of the very narratives of displacement which can be told by increasing numbers of exiles, expatriates and migrants who came to Europe from the ex-colonies – of all places! From here, Hall places hope in a new conception of 'ethnicity' which carries the beginning for a new politics of identity, one which not only insists on difference, specificity and conjuncture, but also on movement, articulation and syncretism. In other words, from this perspective Europe's hope for cultural renewal can paradoxically only come from those 'others' who came to Europe precisely as a result of

the history of European colonialism, such as Stuart Hall himself! And indeed, if we look at films like Frear's *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, Po Chih Leong's *Ping Pong* and, of course, Isaac Julien's *Young Soul Rebels*, we can see how they derive their vitality precisely from the necessity for and the pleasure of constant cultural *exchange* in the staking out of any 'identity'. It is also significant that none of these 'new ethnic' films, made in Europe but not from Europe, display the nostalgic melancholy that I have discussed earlier. These films attempt to come to terms with the complexities of the present without resorting to idealised images of either the past or the future; they are, in a sense, post-Utopian, fully aware of the fact that people living in Europe, while quite different from one another in interest, wealth, power, 'culture', are nevertheless, as Clifford Geertz has put it, 'contained in a world where, tumbled as they are into endless connection, it is increasingly difficult to get out of each other's way'.[16] What these films emphasise are not impossibilities, but the search for new possibilities. Perhaps, then, the best bet for Europe to disentangle itself from its hegemonic past is to become post-European.

Notes

This paper has benefited greatly from conversations with Jon Stratton, to whom my thanks.

1. Jean Baudrillard, *America* (London: Verso, 1988), p. 73.
2. See, e.g., Denys Hay, *Europe: The Emergence of an Idea* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, revised ed. 1968).
3. See Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).
4. See Edward Said, 'Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors', *Critical Enquiry 15*, Winter 1989, pp. 205–25.
5. See, e.g., Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* (London: Routledge, 1989).
6. Donald Horne, *The Great Museum* (London: Pluto Press, 1984).
7. See, e.g., Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988).
8. One could think, for example, of the cultural specificity of the French feminisms of theorists such as Irigaray, Cixous and Kristeva for whom the feminine stands for the principle of what is repressed by the symbolic order of culture.
9. This tendency is particularly strong in the refined writings of Central European thinkers such as Gyorgy Konrad and Vaclav Havel. The post-Communist predicament, however, would need a separate examination.
10. The feminised name Protée for the black male servant may be seen as signifying the place to which the colonial 'other' is relegated in colonialist discourse: that of the diffuse feminine (see also footnote 9). According to Claire Denis, director of the film, Protée was quite a common name used for black servants by French colonialists.
11. Of course America, or more precisely the United States, represents an altogether site for the struggle for cultural identity, which cannot be addressed here.
12. Jurgen Habermas, 'Modernity – an Incomplete Project', in Hal Foster (ed.), *Postmodern Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 1985).
13. Baudrillard, *America*, pp. 78–9.
14. Stuart Hall, 'Minimal Selves', *ICA Documents* 6 (London: ICA, 1987), p. 83.
15. Baudrillard, *America*, p. 83.
16. Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 147.